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### TALKING WITH ...

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Here at last is the collection of eleven extraordinary monologues for eleven actresses which had them on their feet cheering at the famed Actors Theatre of Louisville—audiences, critics and yes even jaded theatre professionals. The mysteriously pseudonymous Jane Martin is truly a find—a new writer with a wonderfully idiosyncratic style, whose characters alternately amuse, move and frighten us always now, however, speaking to use from the depths of their souls. The characters include a baton twirler who has found God through twirling, a fundamentalist snake handler, an ex-rodeo rider crowded out of the life she has cherished by men in 3-piece suits who want her to dress up “like Minnie damn Mouse in a tutu,” an actress willing to go to any length to get a job, and an old woman who claims she once saw a man with “cerebral walrus” walk into a McDonald’s and be healed by a Big Mac. Eleven female monologues, of which half a dozen verge on brilliance. —London Guardian. “Whoever (Jane Martin) is, she’s a writer with an original imagination.” —Village Voice. “With Jane Martin, the monologue has taken on a new poetic form, intensive in its method and revelatory in its impact.” —Philadelphia Inquirer. “A dramatist with an original voice... (these are) tales about enthusiasms that become obsessions, eccentric confessionals that levitate with religious symbolism and gladsome humor.” —N.Y. Times. *Talking With* is the 1982 winner of the American Theatre Critics Association Award for Best Regional Play. (#22009)

(Royalty, \$60–\$40.)

If individual monologues are done separately: Royalty, \$15–\$10.)

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## HAROLD AND MAUDE

(ADVANCED GROUPS—COMEDY)

By COLIN HIGGINS

9 men, 8 women—Various settings

Yes: *the Harold and Maude!* This is a stage adaptation of the wonderful movie about the suicidal 19-year-old boy who finally learns how to truly live when he meets up with that delightfully whacky octogenarian, Maude. Harold is the proverbial Poor Little Rich Kid. His alienation has caused him to attempt suicide several times, though these attempts are more cries for attention than actual attempts. His peculiar attachment to Maude, whom he meets at a funeral (a mutual passion), is what saves him—and what captivates us. This new stage version, a hit in France directed by the internationally-renowned Jean-Louis Barrault, will certainly delight both aficionados of the film and new-comers to the story. “Offbeat upbeat comedy.” —Christian Science Monitor. (#10032)

(Royalty, \$60–\$40.)

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# *Piaf*

by  
**Pam Gems**



SAMUEL FRENCH, INC.  
25 WEST 45TH STREET NEW YORK 10036  
7623 SUNSET BOULEVARD HOLLYWOOD 90046  
LONDON TORONTO

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## **PLYMOUTH THEATRE**

8 A. Shubert Organization Theatre

Gerald Schoenfeld, *Chairman*

Bernard B. Jacobs, *President*

ELIZABETH I. McCANN NELLE NUGENT  
THE SHUBERT ORGANIZATION RAY LARSEN  
in association with  
WARNER THEATRE PRODUCTIONS INC.  
present

### **JANE LAPOTAIRE**

in

### **PIAF**

by **PAM GEMS**

also starring

### **ZOË WANAMAKER**

with (in alphabetical order)

LEWIS ARLT MICHAEL AYR ROBERT CHRISTIAN STEPHEN DAVIES  
PETER FRIEDMAN JUDITH IVEY DAVID LEARY DAVID PURDHAM  
JEAN SMART SHERRY STEINER KENNETH WELSH NICHOLAS WOODESON

Setting by Costumes by Lighting by  
DAVID JENKINS JULIE WEISS BEVERLY EMMONS

Musical Direction and Arrangements by  
MICHAEL DANSICKER

Assistant Director  
HELAINE HEAD

Directed by

### **HOWARD DAVIES**

"PIAF" WAS ORIGINALLY PRODUCED BY THE ROYAL SHAKESPEARE COMPANY

AT WEDNESDAY MATINEES, THE ROLE OF PIAF IS PLAYED BY JUDITH IVEY

The Producers and Theatre Management are Members  
of The League of New York Theatres and Producers, Inc.

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### THE BAND

MICHAEL DANSICKER—Music Director/Piano  
CHARLES SAUSS—Accordion  
RAY KILDAY—Bass

*Piaf* is a celebration of the life of Edith Piaf, from the late twenties through 1963.

PIAF IS PERFORMED WITH ONE INTERMISSION.

### UNDERSTUDIES AND STANDBYS

Understudies and standbys never substitute for listed players unless a specific announcement for the appearance is made at the time of the performance.

### ALTERNATE FOR PIAF — JUDITH IVEY

The following actors understudy the following roles: LEWIS ARLT—Man At Rehearsal; CYNTHIA CARLE—Marlene, Nurse, Madeleine #2; ROBERT CHRISTIAN—Physiotherapist, Paul; STEPHEN DAVIES—Eddie; PETER FRIEDMAN—Dope Pusher, German Soldier #1; MICHAEL HAMMOND—Manager, Inspector, Georges, Amer. Sailor #1, German Soldier #2; CHRISTOPHER McHALE—Marcel, Jacques, Theo, Legionnaire, American Sailor #1; DAVID PURDHAM—Leplee, SHERRY STEINER—Toine, Madeleine, Piaf #2; ROBERT THALER—Pierre, Jacko, Emil, Lucien, Little Louis; KENNETH WELSH—Angelo; NICHOLAS WOODSON—Barman, Butcher.

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Pam Gems' *Piaf*, directed by Howard Davies, had its world premiere on October 5, 1978 at The Other Place in Stratford-Upon-Avon, the "studio" theatre of the Royal Shakespeare Company dedicated to the commissioning and production of new plays. It moved to the Royal Shakespeare Company's Warehouse theatre in London, and then to the larger RSC theatre, the Aldwych where it played in repertory beginning in December 1979. Two London West End engagements followed in 1980 at the Wyndham's and Piccadilly Theatres.

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### CAST

(in order of appearance)

Emcee/Manager, also known as Henri	DAVID LEARY
Piaf	JANE LAPOTAIRE
"Papa" Leplée, owner of Cluny Club	PETER FRIEDMAN
Toine	ZOE WANAMAKER
Emil, maitre d' at Cluny Club	NICHOLAS WOODSON
Legionnaire	STEPHEN DAVIES
Jacques	LEWIS ARLT
Eddie	ROBERT CHRISTIAN
Little Louis	MICHAEL AYR
Police Inspector	KENNETH WELSH
Paul, man with rose	DAVID PURDHAM
German Soldier #1	LEWIS ARLT
German Soldier #2	MICHAEL AYR
Georges	KENNETH WELSH
Butcher	ROBERT CHRISTIAN
Pierre, on bicycle; later, Piaf's agent	STEPHEN DAVIES
Marlene	JEAN SMART
Marcel	ROBERT CHRISTIAN
American Sailor #1	DAVID PURDHAM
American Sailor #2	PETER FRIEDMAN
Barman	ROBERT CHRISTIAN
Madeleine	JUDITH IVEY
Lucien	MICHAEL AYR
Angelo	LEWIS ARLT
Physiotherapist	KENNETH WELSH
Jacko	NICHOLAS WOODSON
Dope pusher	MICHAEL AYR
Nurse	SHERRY STEINER
Theo	DAVID PURDHAM

### WEDNESDAY MATINEE

Piaf	JUDITH IVEY
Madeleine	SHERRY STEINER
Nurse	CYNTHIA CARLE

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MUSICAL NUMBERS

LA VILLE INCONNUE

MON MANEGE A MOI

L'ACCORDENONISTE

HYMNE A L'AMOUR

LA BELLE HISTOIRE D'AMOUR

NON, JE NE REGRETTE RIEN

LES TROIS CLOCHES

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## ACT ONE

### SCENE ONE

*A bare stage. A MIDDLE-AGED MAN, in a dinner jacket, enters and approaches the central microphone.*

MANAGER. (*Mutters into the microphone.*) One two, three  
... (*To audience.*) Ladies and gentlemen... ladies and gentlemen, I give you... your own... Piaf!

*He gestures to the wings, with a glance off, and exits. Musical Intro LA VIE EN ROSE. There is a perceptible pause, but then PIAF appears. She makes it to the microphone, murmurs the name of composer and lyricist, and starts to sing LA VIE EN ROSE. She gets to the third line of the song... sways... and slurs to a halt. She sways, staring out in an unfocused way at the audience. The Music stops. The MANAGER enters, and tries to assist her off. She resists, holding on to the microphone, and getting nasty.*

PIAF. Get off! Get your fucking hands off me. I ain't done nothing yet!

*There is a brief, undignified struggle.*

BLACKOUT

## SCENE TWO

*The Cluny Club . . . outside the Cluny Club . . . and down left left an area with a sagging bed denoting PIAF and TOINE's room.*

*The young PIAF enters, and starts to juggle, near the steps to the Cluny Club. A MAN enters, apart from her, and his mate ties him up in a canvas bag, with chains. From their thank-yous and acknowledgements it is apparent that they are attracting a crowd. PIAF is not. She tries a tumble, unsuccessfully. She pulls faces at her rival, indicates that his act is rubbish. But his mate looms.*

*She is stumped. She begins to hum La Vie En Rose. She begins to sing, turning a little, with the joie de vivre of youth, increasing her voice to full throat for the hell of it, with a jeering gesture at her rival. To her amazement someone gives her some money.*

*LOUIS LEPLÉE, the owner of the club, appears. He is middle-aged, wears a long, smart overcoat, hat, silver-topped cane, white silk scarf, gloves, with his hair well-brilliantined. He pauses, in the shadows, to listen, lights up, tapping his cigarette on his silver cigarette case thoughtfully. The escapist, having lost his audience, leaves in disgust. PIAF, eyes shining as she mimes reacting to receiving money, sings up lustily. She sees Leplee, grabs up the money quickly to be away, but he restrains her.*  
PIAF. Get your fucking hands off me, I ain't done nothing.

LEPLEE. All right, kid . . . all right!

PIAF. Oh. Sorry guv. (*cheekily*) What can I do for you? (*This makes him laugh aloud.*) No, well, if I'd knew you was coming I'd have shaved my legs.

LEPLEE. Never mind the legs . . . where did you get that big voice?

PIAF. It's only so's they can hear me over the traffic.

LEPLEE. How long have you been singing?

PIAF. Coupla minutes, that's all.

LEPLEE. (*assessing her shrewdly*) Extraordinary.

PIAF. I said sorry!

*He turns to go into the club, but glances back, then gestures her to him with a head movement. She looks behind to make sure he means her, then makes towards him in mock resignation, with a silly, self-conscious grin at the audience. We see them in silhouette, talking, but the music comes up, drowning conversation as he gives her some money.*

*Light change. Lights up on Piau's room. PIAF crosses, just ahead of TOINE who enters, throws her large black sateen thirties clutch bag on the bed and sits heavily, taking off her shoes and massaging her feet, wincing.*

PIAF. Here Toine, guess what!

TOINE. Buzz off.

PIAF. Wassa matter with you?

TOINE. Fucking pimp's had me on that corner. I thought my bleeding toes would burst. I haven't seen more than a couple of fellers all night . . . he's gotta change my shift.

PIAF. Here, listen —

TOINE. Him with his bloody favourites — think I don't know?

PIAF. Listen! You're never going to —

TOINE. That fat Helene, sits in the fucking caff half the time, I'm not gonna stand for it —

PIAF. This bloke . . . !

TOINE. (*irritable*) What?

PIAF. It's me big chance — you know, like on the movies . . .

TOINE. (*baffled*) Eh?

PIAF. This bloke comes up to me — hey! remember what the fortune teller told us — !

TOINE. Hang on . . .

PIAF. *You* remember! I was standing outside the Cluny Club, singing —

TOINE. Singing?

PIAF. Yeah, you know . . . for a lark . . . I'm just getting going when up he comes . . . real swell . . . top hat, silk scarf, silver cane, the lot. Next thing I know he asks me inside.

TOINE. Iyly!

PIAF. Toine, you've never seen nothink like it — white tablecloths, little velvet chairs with gold tassels, anything I wanted to drink —

TOINE. Hah, I get it — another fucking funny, Christ he must be hard up . . . here, can you see any crabs?

PIAF. (*Looks perfunctorily.*) No, listen! He says to me, he says "You've got a good voice, kid . . ."

TOINE. Hah!

PIAF. Shut up. . . "I want you. . . ." (*She fixes TOINE with a magnetic stare.*) . . . "I want you to star in my club"! Watcha think of that!

TOINE. Oh Christ, she's away.

PIAF. It's true!

TOINE. Ede —

PIAF. Look 'm not saying he's young or good-looking or anything —

TOINE. Ede, have you gone off your head or something?

PIAF. I keep trying to tell you! (*Her rage subsides as she concedes the unlikeliness of the tale.*) He wants me to sing . . . in his show. Cluny Club.

TOINE. Where all the swells go? Get away.

*But PIAF is counting the money.*

TOINE. Listen . . . where did you get that?

PIAF. He gave it me . . . honest. For nothing!

*They both look at the money, baffled. TOINE shakes her head slowly.*

TOINE. Nah. (*PIAF waits patiently for the verdict.*) Nah . . . sounds funny to me. Look, kid, I wouldn't have nothing to do wiv it. He's got a little business going, he's short of girls — (*She laughs.*) . . . haha, hahaha . . . he must be!

PIAF. Speak for your bloody self!

TOINE. (*threatening*) Get off.

*PIAF backs away prudently. Hiatus. She scuffs moodily . . . picks up the dress TOINE has taken off.*

TOINE. (*without raising her eyes from her magazine*) It's too big for yuh.

*PIAF hums moodily, ruining TOINE's efforts to read. She puts down her book with a martyred sigh.*

TOINE. Oh all right. You can have this. (*She proffers her purple scarf.*)

PIAF. Thanks! (*She arranges it around her neck.*) Here, don't laugh. He told me to have a bath . . . wash me hair.

*They laugh, jeering.*

TOINE. Tell you what, though. (*She finds a comb in her bag, tidies PIAF's hair, arranges a spicurl on her forehead.*) That's better — we-ell, you wanna look decent.

PIAF. Thanks. (*She makes to go. Pauses.*)

TOINE. (*without looking up from her book*) OK, what is it now?

PIAF. Can I have a lend of your handbag?

TOINE. No.

*But PIAF knows the value of fidgeting. TOINE grinds her teeth, hurls the bag at her.*



PIAF. Thanks!

*She tucks the unsuitably large poche under her arm and struts off proudly, causing TOINE to grin.*

TOINE. Take it easy, squirt. (*To the audience, tired.*) Well, can't be for the fucking singing, can it — he can hear that for nothing in the street. It'll be the twinkling lights of old Tangier for you, I shouldn't doubt. (*She picks up her things and goes.*)

Music.

### SCENE THREE

*The Cluny Club. Chairs on tables. PIANIST strums, PAPA LEPLEE waits with his MANAGER. PIAF runs on.*

PAPA. You're late.

PIAF. Sorry.

PAPA. (*Looks at her, then, to MANAGER.*) Ee-dith. We'll have to do better than that.

MANAGER. What about the one you said before?

PAPA. Tich?...Nipper?...what was it?

MANAGER. Tich Sparrow.

*PIAF, now sprawled on the top of the piano, rears up in horror...*

PAPA. What do you think?

MANAGER. S'all right. No good going for something glamorous.

PIAF. Whaddya mean?

PAPA. The little sparrow . . . La Mome Piaf . . . The Kid Sparrow . . . Piaf . . .

*PIAF mimes being sick over the piano keys.*

MANAGER. Piaf . . .

PIAF. Piaf? What sort of a name's that?

(*she roars*)

PAPA. Better then Edith Gassion. It's not a stage name, kid!

PIAF. Oh. Oh! Well . . . I know . . . what about Lola del Sol?

MANAGER. Piaf — yeah, that's OK.

PIAF. Zozine Heliotrope . . . Claudette Cunningham? . . .

PAPA. (*Trying it out.*) Piaf . . . Piaf . . . Piaf . . . Piaf? . . . (*With conviction.*) Piaf!

PIAF. Desiree de la Renta . . . Desiree!

PAPA. Piaf.

PIAF. (*Leaps down in fury.*) Piaf? Where am I going to get with a name like that?

LEPLEE. Sing.

*She goes to the microphone, begins to sing LES MOMES tastefully, in a ladylike manner. The others burst out laughing. She stops, confused and humiliated.*

PAPA. No, no kid. Not like that. Sing the way you were singing in the street. Rougher . . . I want it rougher.

*The MANAGER and the PIANIST exchange shrugs. What does the Boss want with this squirt? But PIAF sings the song lustily. The MANAGER and LEPLEE exchange a glance, the MANAGER conceding — not bad. He and the PIANIST go. EMIL, a good-looking young waiter, sets a table.*

LEPLEE. OK, kid. OK.

PIAF. (*Not sure what he means.*) Yeah?

PAPA. Are you hungry?

PIAF. Not 'alf. (*She crosses to table, set for dinner, sits. Then she sips delicately from the finger bowl. EMIL guffaws.*)

PIAF. What's the matter?

EMIL. That's the finger bowl, scruff — it's for washing yer 'ands.

PIAF. Where's the soap? All right, clever cock. Seen me drink — now you can watch me piss. (*She does so. And marches off, to PAPA LEPLÉE's laughter.*)

*Light change. Low light. PAPA stacks a last chair. A noise. He jumps, alarmed. And sees PIAF at a distance.*

PAPA. Oh, it's you. I thought you'd pushed off . . what do you want?

PIAF. I thought you'd want to see me.

PAPA. What for? Come on, I'm tired, I've had a long day.

PIAF. Up to you, innit?

PAPA. What do you mean?

PIAF. I thought you might wanna — well, after all, I mean . . you did give me my big break — I mean, it's OK by me.

PAPA. What?

PIAF. Well you must have done it for something. If you want sucking off or anything, just say the word — no skin off my nose.

PAPA. (*dry*) Oh . . I see. Are you ready, my dear? (*But addressed to EMIL, who appears, bearing PAPA's coat, hat, scarf. He robes him reverently. PAPA puts his arm across the boy's shoulders. EMIL smiles, malevolent.*) As you see . . little fish.

PIAF. Oh. Oh! . . . why din't you say! (*She gives him an affectionate and familiar dig in the ribs.*)

PAPA. (*To EMIL.*) What do you think?

EMIL. (*shrugs*) They seemed to like her — at least you can hear her over the cutlery.

*PAPA and EMIL leave . . PIAF crosses.*

#### SCENE FOUR

*The street. The music is UN SALE PETIT BROUILLARD. PIAF is getting it from a LEGIONNAIRE.*

SOLDIER. And sun and sand and sea and sand and sand and

sand and sand and sea... (*PIAF simulates noisy and joyous ecstasy.*)... and flies, flies, flies, flies, flies!

TOINE. (*enters*) Ede! Ede, is that you? We can hear you half way down the street, you're s'posed to be down the Club, Papa's screaming blue murder!

PIAF. Hey, Toine . . cop on to this, will you? (*Disengaging herself.*)

TOINE. What, for nothing?

PIAF. Do us a favour . . I'm pegged out.

TOINE. Oh all right. But not for nothing.

*He pays. She takes over.*

PIAF. (*going*) He's a legionnaire.

TOINE. Oh, why didn't you say? (*She livens it up a bit.*)

SOLDIER. And sea and sand and sand and sea and sand and sand and...

TOINE. What's he on about?

PIAF. He's a fucking Algerian!

TOINE. Oh. Hang on . . hang on . . . holdee on a bittee, matey — here, you wouldn't like to lie down, would you . . only I got bad feet, see?

*Lights down on TOINE and LEGIONNAIRE as PIAF crosses to PAPA, who sits at a table drinking brandy. She throws herself on his lap.*

PAPA. (*as he sees her*) You're late! Steady on, my head's not too good.

PIAF. You know your trouble, too much of the other.

PAPA. You're a familiar little devil. You're going to have to settle down, you know, if you want to make something of yourself . . you won't always have me.

PIAF. (*cheeky*) Why, where you going?

PAPA. I don't know, I've been feeling a little odd for the last two days.

PIAF. A little who?

PAPA. (*laughs*) I should miss you. Ever get nightmares?

PIAF. Nah.

PAPA. I had a funny dream about my mother last night. She seemed to be beckoning me.

PIAF. Lucky you, Mine took one look and pissed off.

PAPA. All on your own, are you?

PIAF. (*sturdy*) Yeah. (*casual afterthought*) I did have a little girl once.

PAPA. (*surprised*) You?

PIAF. Yeah. Cunts.

PAPA. I beg your pardon?

PIAF. The people looking after her. Only never told me! Somebody down the road said "Hey, d'you know your kid's ill?" I was round there the same week, they wouldn't let me in — "Ew new, it's not convenient, anyway, she's dead, died six o'clock this morning." I wasn't having that (*Laughs in fond reminiscence.*) Nah, we had a real old punch up. Hey, did you know something? When people die they go all stiff! She was sliding about the parquet in the end . . . talk about shove-hapenny, we had a right old fracass! (*She laughs in fond reminiscence. But he stumbles to his feet, almost backing away from her.*) Look, it's not unreasonable. I only wanted a bit of her hair, for me locket.

*He looks down at her, then turns, moving even further away.*

*Music . . . Sombre. PIAF turns to her three friends, JACQUES and EDDIE, who look tough, and LOUIS, younger. PIAF throws her arms about JACQUES, who throws her off irritably.*

JACQUES. Get him over here. (*He twists her arm cruelly.*)

PIAF. Ow! Hey, Papa, come and have a drink. (*PAPA approaches, genial.*) Jacques . . . Eddie . . . and little Louis (*JACQUES digs her in the ribs.*) What do you think of little Louis?

PAPA. (*With a quick glance at LOUIS.*) Not just now. I'll get Emil to give you a drink.

JACQUES. Busy counting the taking, eh Papa?

PAPA. (*jovial*) Never you mind about that.

EDDIE. Go on, you must be rolling in it.

PAPA. That's what they all think.

*PAPA takes another look at LOUIS. The others move away discreetly but PIAF blows it, in a moment of panic.*

PIAF. (*returning*) Hey . . hey, d'you hear the story about the man with cock trouble?

*They turn on her murderously.*

JACQUES. (*To PIAF.*) Shut up.

PIAF. (*Unable to stop.*) He goes to the chemist and says "Look, there's something the matter with my cock"...no, listen and the chemist says "For fuck's sake, man, can't you see I got a shop full of ladies, you'll do me out of business." Ah. . "Take these tablets three times a day and if you have to come back for Christ's sake call it your elbow." So he comes back the next week and the chemist says "Tablets any good, how's your elbow?" And he says "Oh, much better, but I still can't piss out of it"!

*She shrieks with laughter. PAPA laughs and goes . . The moment has been lost. Music of LA VILLE INCONNUE.*

JACQUES. (*Grabbing her.*) You messed it up, didn't you?

PIAF. Never.

JACQUES. All right, where'd you say he kept it?

PIAF. What?

JACQUES. His money, you twat. . the cashbox!

EDDIE. Edie, look, why don't you and me get together . . eh?

PIAF. (*drunk*) Yeah . .

EDDIE. What about poor little Louis here, though?

JACQUES. Does he keep it in his room?

EDDIE. Little Louis could go up there, proposition him . . you never know, might work out, then you and me can enjoy ourselves.

PIAF. Yeah.

*Music.*

JACQUES. Where's the safe, you bitch?

*They cross, in the direction of PAPA. PIAF makes to follow but LOUIS puts out a restraining hand, then melts away. A shot. PIAF sits, whitefaced, at the table.*

*PIAF sings LA VILLE INCONNUE.*

#### SCENE FIVE

*PIAF and POLICE INSPECTOR.*

INSPECTOR. Come and sit down. Let me see...ah...Edith. (*PIAF fidgets, as he writes.*) Name?

PIAF. You got it. (*nodding at his papers*)

INSPECTOR. (*Glares, and then decides to be foxy.*) That's right. Edith Cassion...known as La Mome Piau. (*writing it down*)

PIAF. (*nervous*) What am I supposed to have done...I ain't done nothing —

INSPECTOR. Address?

PIAF. Haven't got one.

INSPECTOR. No fixed address?

PIAF. I ain't done nothing —

INSPECTOR. (*sudden frontal bark*) What was your involvement in —

PIAF. Eh?

INSPECTOR. (*Sudden frontal bark.*) What was your involvement in the Leplee affair?

PIAF. What?

INSPECTOR. Name?

PIAF. Oh Christ.

INSPECTOR. I seriously advise you to co-operate.

PIAF. I ain't done nothing!

INSPECTOR. That is what I am here to find out. (*slight pause*) Father's occupation?

PIAF. Street acrobat. And businessman.

INSPECTOR. What was your relationship with the deceased?

PIAF. Who?

INSPECTOR. With Louis Leplee.

PIAF. Oh, he weren't no relation of mine. He was a big shot!

INSPECTOR. You were with Leplee the night he was murdered.

PIAF. Not only me. .other people.

INSPECTOR. Including friends of yours.

PIAF. People I know, yes.

INSPECTOR. (*showing her a paper*) These names? You were seen together.

PIAF. Just having a laugh.

INSPECTOR. Planning to rob your patron, Louis Leplee?

PIAF. No!

INSPECTOR. You told them where he kept his money?

PIAF. In his room. (*And could bite her tongue out*)

INSPECTOR. You told them.

PIAF. They ASKED me!

INSPECTOR. Edith Gassion, I ask you, formally. . .what was your implication in the Leplee affair?

*He stands over her, slapping his leg lightly with his right hand.*

PIAF. I ain't done nothing! (*He slaps her face.*) Leave me alone. .he was my guvnor. .he give me my big break, I'm not gonna want to — (*He hits her again.*) . . .I'm. .I'm not gonna do him in, am I? (*He hits her again. This time she breaks down, sobbing noisily.*) . . .I keep seeing him. . .with his face. .all over his chops. .all. . .(*She continues to sob. Then it subsides. She pulls herself together with a tremendous effort, squints up at him mutinously.*) I ain't done nothing. (*He goes. PIAF relaxes back in her chair. She looks round idly, as if in a cell. . .stretches out her legs, then her arms. She blows air*



*out of her cheeks, unhurried...hums part of MON MANEGE A MOI (TU ME FAIS TOURNER LA TETE), turning her body to the sound.) Ahh. What a shame. What a shame. (murmured)*

*TOINE bursts in carrying a newspaper. She is followed on by an AGENT.*

TOINE. Ede, you're famous!

PIAF. (*bewildered*) What's going on?

AGENT. Is this her?!

TOINE. Yeah!

PIAF. What?

AGENT. God Almighty. Oh well. Listen, nipper, you're going to be doing a guest appearance tonight...Pickup Club, right? Show her the bit in the paper, that's what we want... all about your life with Papa...menage a trois...that sort of thing...get it?

PIAF. What's it all about?

TOINE. There! (*Points to article in the newspaper.*)

PIAF. (*reads*) 'I danced the tango with Adolf Hitler'...

TOINE. Nah, there...(*She reads.*) 'Club Singer in Alleged Gangland Slaying'...they think you done him in!

AGENT. But they can't prove anything, you're in the clear. Sign there - come on, I ain't got all day.

PIAF. What's he talking about?

TOINE. Go on, Ede. (*Urging her to sign.*)

PIAF. (*to AGENT*) Push off!

*The AGENT hits her in the face, like the INSPECTOR.*

AGENT. Now listen squirt. You - are money. And while you're money you'll do as I say.

PIAF. Who says so?

*But he lifts her from the ground and dumps her down, threatening. She gets the point.*

AGENT. Here's five hundred. Get yourself toffed up. I want you soignée, sophisticated, and elegant. Oh, and get rid of that. (*He points to TOINE.*)

TOINE. What do you mean, I'm her partner — anyway, where's that fifty you promised me? (*He goes.*) How much?

PIAF counts, then examines a note.

PIAF. (*awed*) Hey...hey...

*She suddenly smacks herself in the face with the money, letting it fly.*

TOINE. What you doing! (*She scrambles about, picking up the money feverishly.*) What you wanna do that for?

PIAF. OK...quick, let's push off before he sobers up.

TOINE. No...look...

PIAF. You nuts or something? He's gonna be back, bloody cops on his tail —

TOINE. Neow! No...he's working for YOU...didn't you get it?

PIAF. Eh?

TOINE. He's your AGENT!

PIAF. What!

TOINE. Well he says he is. Once he knows you can't sing... but while it lasts...

PIAF. (*warming*) Yeah...

TOINE. We could BUY things!

PIAF. Yeah...nah, he's gone daft, pinched it out the till, he'll be in the wagon by now.

TOINE. Look, he bought me a brandy. For nothing! You're in the papers, Ede...you're famous!

PIAF. Yeah?

TOINE. Yeah.

PIAF. Right. (*She splits the money, gives half to TOINE.*)

TOINE. Thanks!!

PIAF. I'm gonna get myself one of those little black skirts with the diamond panel down the front. Nice little blouse... ten blouses...

*her arm. She shivers with ecstasy.*) The Restaurant des Fleurs . . . ten o'clock. I shall squeeze time, beloved, until then. (*He blows her a delicate kiss and goes.*)

PIAF. Ooh! (*TOINE groans with stomach cramps.*) What's the matter with you?

TOINE. My stomach feels like a box of budgies.

PIAF. Tch. . . oh! (*But ecstasy overwhelms her again.*) No, did you see him? Those eyes. . . like a shopful of irises. . .

TOINE. (*in discomfort*) Ooh!

PIAF. Oh Christ. . . you'd spoil anything. And look at this place — did you get the vol au vents?

TOINE. Forgot.

PIAF. Two squashed Gitanes and a packet of Cream Crackers, you're gonna have to pull your socks up, mate, I don't call this putting on the style, did you get the peanuts? (*TOINE shakes her head.*) Typical. You're supposed to be the bloody hostess! I got to be able to delegate, it stands to reason, I can't do all the whole thing on my own. . .

TOINE. Sorry, I been a bit off colour.

PIAF. No, well, only, you know, I must have some reliability. All you do is sit round reading and smoking all the fags. . . you let down the whole feel of it.

TOINE. Sorry.

PIAF. Well. . . *She is slightly embarrassed in her new role of 'boss'*. . . take a hint. There's more to life than doughnuts and Gary Cooper, you know. (*But she cannot contain her high spirits. She grabs a wandering mike and breaks in L'ACCORDIONISTE. PAUL sits, in white tie. . . and she crosses, and bends over the table, singing into his face. At this end of the song he rises to greet her. She gives him a quick feel. He extricates himself with a furious frown, looking to see if they have been observed.*)

PAUL. (*furious hiss*) Piaf! . . .

PIAF. (*innocence*) What's the matter?

PAUL. (*vicious mutter*) You know how I hate to be touched.

PIAF. (*slight pause*) How about the song?

PAUL. I thought you were over the top a bit.

PIAF. Me. . . never!

PAUL. Piau, your private life is your private life. Don't mix it.

PIAF. Come on, they love me singing to you...everybody knows! (*She heaves a happy sigh.*) I used to see meself off every night on tour, dreaming about you in that blue dressing gown.

PAUL. Piau, your voice!

PIAF. Oh Christ, nothing's right. I wish I was back with Toine and the boys.

PAUL. You don't have to stay in the gutter just because you were born there.

PIAF. I feel out of place! I'm doing like what you said... trying to be a lady... (*She becomes aware of her own voice, and shrivels in her seat.*) ... Sorry, love ...

PAUL. After all... (*Takes a fastidious sip from his glass.*) ... After all, they don't want rubbish at the ...

PIAF. (*screams*) The ABC? The ABC? You rogue...you devil! He never said! He's bloody gone and done it and you never said! Is it true? Have I got it? The ABC? No...I don't believe it... (*But he leads her to the microphone. She sings L'ACCORDEONISTE. At the end, the MANAGER runs on and PIAF realises that there is something wrong.*) Arrêtez... stop, stop the music.

*The MANAGER crosses to the microphone.*

MANAGER. Ladies and gentlemen...ladies and gentlemen ...countrymen...countrywomen...I have to tell you... it is war...war!

*He breaks momentarily into a large white handkerchief. PIAF, excited, grabs the microphone.*

PIAF. Bloody Boche...not a good prick among 'em and I should know...

MANAGER. Piau, please! Ladies and gentlemen. In this solemn moment in the history of our —

PIAF. (*crowding the mike*) They do it all by numbers you know!

MANAGER. Piau, let go of the mike...ladies and gentlemen...our National Anthem...

PIAF. (*to the tune of KING FAROUK*) 'Make 'em squit, make 'em puke, hang their bollocks on a hook...'

MANAGER. (*losing his cool*) Look, will you shut your fucking mouth...I've got the fucking King of Rumania over there! (*He dies as he realises that he is on sound.*)

### SCENE SIX

*PIAF's apartment. Sumptuous whorehouse furniture. TOINE enters, wearing clothes in the style of France in the forties. Skirts to the knee, huge hat, a sling bag, square-shouldered suit and wedge heeled shoes. PIAF follows her on, removes a bottle of whisky from under her coat and puts it on a tray with two glasses.*

TOINE. Yeah, he said he couldn't come on account of me not having big tits...he said if I had big tits he could come whenever he wanted.

PIAF. Give him the push.

TOINE. Funny, I like him. Usually I only like men with big feet...hey, that's real whisky, where'd you get it?

*PIAF gestures, tantalising.*

TOINE. Is it a celebration or something...I know...somebody's having a birthday upstairs.

PIAF. It's nothing to do with Madame and the girls... (*a knock*)...listen...keep your trap shut and no messing about. (*Two GERMANS enter and click heels.*) Help yourselves... (*Gestures whisky.*)...make yourselves comfortable.

*The GERMANS fall with delight on the whisky.*

TOINE. (*cross*) I wondered what you wanted me for.

1ST BOCHE. Mademozelle Piaf, you are — gut singer!

2ND BOCHE. Fabel hov! (*He makes the girls jump.*)

1ST BOCHE. You are first wiz me. My friend also. We are seeing you in Amsterdam in '37.

PIAF. (*politely*) No shit?

*The SECOND BOCHE, having no French, murders a PIAF song. The GIRLS grimace puzzlement.*

PIAF. (*interrupting*) Yeah, well, wish we could offer you some grub...something to eat. Only we ain't got nothing. Nothing to eat...skint...hungry. (*She makes chewing motions. TOINE points graphically into her mouth.*)

1ST BOCHE. Yah, supplies are very short. We, too, are cut in the rations. (*TOINE sniggers. PIAF digs in an elbow to quieten her.*)

PIAF. Aren't you in the catering corps then? I thought you two were in the catering corps? (*The SECOND BOCHE, sensing a hitch, asks the FIRST BOCHE, in German, the problem. The FIRST BOCHE says he doesn't know whether the girls know they're in the catering corps or whether it would be better to say they were Afrika corps and keep the food to fall back on. PIAF snatches back his whisky. The SECOND BOCHE mutters 'get the grub, get the grub'.*) Share and share alike, that's our motto, mate.

*The SECOND BOCHE re-iterates 'get the grub'.*

1ST BOCHE. Ach, I am the small gift forgetting! (*Lumbers off, staggers back under HUGE crate of food...A German sausage sticking out.*)

2ND BOCHE. (*plunging in with both hands and bringing up two two-pound jars of bottled peaches*) Gut...gut?

PIAF. (*coolly*) Gut.

TOINE. (*rabid*) Gut!! (*The SECOND BOCHE takes off his belt, kneels to join TOINE who is already at the peaches.*)

PIAF. Hang on. Why don't you two boys pop upstairs —

Madame and the girls are dying to give you a good time!

1ST BOCHE. (*jacket already unbuttoned*) Oh but we was thinking...

PIAF. (*awesome dignity*) Oh no. No, no. Me any my friend nottee whores! We only live here because the old slag upstairs gets coal and grub off the Boche...I mean, our German allies...er —

TOINE. So's we don't freeze to death. (*The disappointed GERMANS are thrust out, arguing to each other heatedly. The girls shriek and fall on the tins.*) (*mouth full*) I've never seen so much grub in me life! Tinned peaches!

PIAF. Hey, don't be so fucking greedy!

TOINE. I've only had two bits.

PIAF. You've had three!

TOINE. I haven't!

*They pull the jar between them. GEORGES runs on, holding on to his trousers.*

GEORGES. (*furious*) Did you send those bloody Boche upstairs?

PIAF. Christ, I forgot it was Monday.

TOINE. What?

PIAF. She lets the Resistance in for nothing.

TOINE. What's happened to your mates?

GEORGES. Gone out the window. I hope that bloody glass roof holds.

*A sound of smashing glass. Ending in a tinkle.*

TOINE. (*Slight pause.*) They've fallen through.

GEORGES. Sharp as ever, Einstein.

PIAF. Oh, d'you want the photos?

GEORGES. What photos?

PIAF. The pictures...of me with the boys, you twit... from the prison camp. (*She hands them to him.*) You nearly got us into trouble... Jerry started getting nasty.

TOINE. Yeah, tell him where we hid the film! (*She cackles.*)

GEORGES..(*riffling through shots*) These are no fucking good.

PIAF. Why not?

GEORGES..They're all smiling, aren't they? We need mug shots. You'll have to go again.

PIAF. (*groans*) Oh Christ.

GEORGES. Get your agent to fix another tour — as far as Jerry's concerned you're clean. I want plenty of pictures with the boys, but steady face shots...and for Christ's sakes cut the funny stuff. There's half a million Frenchmen behind wire...how we s'posed to spring 'em without papers?

PIAF. All right, all right.

GEORGES. Well don't fuck about — it's peoples' lives!

PIAF. I know.

GEORGES. Fine bloody way to win a war.

TOINE. We got to eat.

PIAF. (*Giving him a generous bag of the tins*) More than one way of winning, love.

GEORGES. Fuck 'em to death, you mean? (*He goes.*)

TOINE. How many you give him?

A MAN *tries to enter.*

MAN. Hello, my lovelies...you gonna give me a good time?

PIAF. (*laconic*) Pissoff.

TOINE. (*laconic*) You heard.

MAN. I'm a wholesale butcher, love! Now you're not going to turn down a nice boy in the meat business, are you now?

TOINE. (*helping herself liberally to tins*) Oh well, time I was getting back anyway, Ede — you know, the war effort.

*She goes off with the meat man, his hand on her behind.*

PIAF. (*laughs*) Honest, what you'll do for a bit of offal. (*GEORGES enters.*) The answer's no — oh, it's you.

GEORGES. I thought, seeing as how I was here...one for the road?

PIAF. You gotta nerve.



GEORGES. Comforts for the troops, love. Don't want to go empty-handed, do I?

PIAF. (*as they both begin to undress*) Thought I was supposed to be rotten at the war effort.

GEORGES. Did I say that? (*He falls on her.*)

PIAF. Ouf... Christ... champagne and orchids again!

PIAF sings *HOMME A L'AMOUR*.

*End of song. A young man cycles across the stage. He wheels and calls to PIAF.*

PIERRE. Hey...

PIAF. Yeah?

PIERRE. You're Edith Piaf, aren't you?

PIAF. D'you know, ever so many people say that!

PIERRE. (*beginning to ride off*) You really look like her... no kidding! (*PIAF laughs. PIERRE wheels round and skids back alongside her.*) You ARE Piaf!

PIAF. How d'you know?

PIERRE. The laugh!

PIAF. (*worried*) Here, what are you doing out on the streets?

PIERRE. (*touching the side of his nose, conspiratorially*) Ahah...

PIAF. You wanna be careful, kid. They'll pick you up.

PIERRE. I'm OK. (*Gets on his bike.*) Hey Piaf, after the war, can I be your agent?

PIAF. (*laughs*) What a nerve! Got any experience?

PIERRE. No, I've never worked...couldn't get a job. Does that rule me out?

PIAF. From being an agent? No.

PIERRE. Right then — see you after the war.

PIAF. (*touching him up*) Mind you, I got me own conditions.

PIERRE. (*cheeky*) Good! (*He goes.*)

PIAF. Bloody nerve...bicycle clips and all.

*There is a loud explosion...the sound of machine gun fire.*

*Church bells begin to ring, people run back and forth... cheering and singing on P/A...PIAF jumps at another loud bang. TOINE runs on.*

TOINE. Ey...ey...the war's over!

*Another loud bang. They clutch each other.*

PIAF. You kidding?

*GEORGES, PIERRE and MANAGER come on with champagne and glasses. They embrace one another, drink. Background sound maintained.*

MANAGER. To peace!

GEORGES. Freedom!

PIERRE. Money!

TOINE. Food!

PIAF. Love!

*The MEN break into HYMNE A L'AMOUR. TOINE and PIAF join in . . . PIAF grabs the sailor's hat which PIERRE has been wearing. They roar the chorus, in celebration.*

Blackout.

#### SCENE SEVEN

*JOSEPHINE'S NIGHTCLUB. Glamorous placards of JOSEPHINE flanking, one in army uniform. PIAF and TOINE sit down right, with drinks.*

*The scene opens with JOSEPHINE at the microphone, finishing up a song. There are a few bars of appropriate*

*background music as she accepts applause, then crosses to join the others.*

JOSEPHINE. Was I OK?

PIAF. Fine Dusky... (*To TOINE.*)...I said, I'm not touring with a bunch of hopheads — (*To JOSEPHINE.*)...who's the little guy who plays sax?

JOSEPHINE. (*sitting*) Guido. How was the tour?

TOINE. Great.

PIAF. Terrible. (*to TOINE*) Did you get my fags?

TOINE. Oh, forgot.

PIAF. Honest, fuck good you are, all she does is sit on her ass.

JOSEPHINE. Come on.

PIAF. (*to TOINE*) Why don't you just push off, you bloody useless, washed-up whore?

JOSEPHINE. Edith!

TOINE. (*rising*) You can be ever so rude sometimes. (*goes*)

PIAF. Now *she's* got the hump.

JOSEPHINE. Are you kidding? What's the matter with you?

PIAF. Nothing.

JOSEPHINE. You should be top of the world. War over... plenty of eggs about...

PIAF. (*flat*) Yeah.

JOSEPHINE. What's the matter?

PIAF. The fellers have gone home! When I think of all those Yanks. I only had half of them!

JOSEPHINE. Forget it! You're going to the States! I heard about your fee for the tour, has to be good for us all — you're going to be rich, baby!

PIAF. Yeah.

JOSEPHINE. Wanna do a spot... listen, I couldn't get above an E this morning, do a spot for me, hey?

PIAF. Do your own fucking singing.

JOSEPHINE. Like that, is it? Uh—uh. I get it. Where's Gerard? (*PIAF pulls a face.*) Look, I thought you two were supposed to be serious!

PIAF. (*mutters*) Who needs it?

JOSEPHINE. Don't be such an inverted snob! Gerard is good for you. You go down to the country together, you're off the juice — didn't you tell me how good you were feeling?

PIAF. (*miserable*) Well, you know how it is, Dusky.

JOSEPHINE. No I don't. What you want to fuck up for? Look, girl, you're up there now. Take it in your stride. OK, he's a Duke. Who cares? You're not shit — are we shit?

PIAF. Not for me.

JOSEPHINE. Listen, when I first got taken to restaurants, I'd piddle myself — *never* knew when they were going to show me the door, *you* think you've had it rough — *sister!*

PIAF. Sure.

JOSEPHINE. Presidents... Princes — who gives a fuck, they're all made the same. I've known some serious men, kid. Believe me, they appreciate being treated like human beings. They're no different, no better, no worse.

PIAF. (*clears her throat*) Trouble with you, Dusk, is you always see the best in people.

JOSEPHINE. What's wrong with that — listen, Gerard's a great guy. Take it... marry him.

PIAF. Seen his place in the country?

JOSEPHINE. Sure. A palace. Fantastic.

PIAF. (*small pause*) Most mornings when we're down there...

JOSEPHINE. Yes?

PIAF. He has a shower... valet brings in the champagne and a bit of game pie...

JOSEPHINE. And?

PIAF. Shaves himself... puts on a country suit... picks a shirt (*slight pause*) Then he comes down to the big drawing room... the one with the pink and blue Aubusson...

JOSEPHINE. Uhuh?

PIAF. He rings the bell — and I come in dressed as the maid with me tits hanging out.

JOSEPHINE. Sounds like fun.

PIAF. I give him coffee in a Dresden cup off a silver tray. Then he squats down and craps on the carpet.

JOSEPHINE. You're kidding!

PIAF. I'm not. Big deal it's not on my face.

JOSEPHINE. I don't understand. Then what?

PIAF. Some poor sod of a gardener has to come in and clean up after him, get the stains out.

JOSEPHINE. Jesus.

PIAF. He spends most the afternoon on his knees.

JOSEPHINE. Doing... what?

PIAF. Praying. (*She folds her hands, demonstrating.*) The maids just hover round him.

JOSEPHINE. Is he nuts or something?

PIAF. Wouldn't think so, watch him playing the market. No, I'm just his bit of rough — well, he's had everything else. Except parents. No, I've never been taken with the aristocracy so-called. Not since Her Ladyship here came up before an old bloke she'd been with the night before and he gave her thirty days.

TOINE returning, smacks down the cigarettes in front of PIAF, ratty, and knocks back PIAF's drink. Sits, belching.

TOINE. What? (*belches again, discreetly*)

JOSEPHINE. (*to PIAF*) So you gave him the ring back? (*PIAF displays her naked third finger.*) You did the right thing, kid. The guy should use the john.

PIAF. Still on me own, though.

JOSEPHINE. Listen, who needs it?

PIAF. I do. You must have somebody.

TOINE. What for?

PIAF. It ain't natural. Bad for the liver.

JOSEPHINE. Look, you got a career to consider, Edith —

PIAF. No. No. I must be in love. No good otherwise. No sense in it. (*Pause. TOINE shifts, restless.*)

JOSEPHINE. Right. OK. I get the problem. Okeydoke. In that case, midget, I guess we have to fix you up.

PIAF. Oh, dont' —

JOSEPHINE. No, no. This time I'm talking about REAL class... a REAL man. A human being. And that's not something too thick on the ground I'm telling you.

PIAF. Who is he, what's his name?

JOSEPHINE. Marcel.

PIAF. Marcel? Marcel who? No! You mean you know him  
...you know the Champ?!

*JOSEPHINE and TOINE leave. LIGHT CHANGE. PIAF,  
downstage, dances back and forward, like a boxer, her  
fists up.*

PIAF. Kill him...kill him...give it to him, let him have it  
...oh no...oh no... stop him...Marcel! Come on...come on  
...get back in there...come on, love...let him have it...go  
on...go on! Ah! ...that's it...that's it...you're on the way  
...the Champ! The Champ!

#### SCENE EIGHT

##### *PIAF'S APARTMENT.*

*PIAF and MARCEL in friendly, post-coital mood. He sits  
back, watching her dress, put on her stockings. They  
mess about a bit.*

PIAF. I wish you could have seen me when I was a kid,  
I had lovely little tits.

MARCEL. They look all right to me.

PIAF. (*touching her jawline*) I'm losing me teeth, too.  
Let's have a look at yours. (*She inspects his mouth.*) Christ,  
Aladdin's cave! Must have cost you a fortune! Ain't you  
got none of your own, Marce?

MARCEL. They get knocked loose...rot off at the neck.  
Least, take 'em out, you don't get your cheeks cut when you're  
working.

PIAF. Yeah, reminds me of the little daft kids...in the home  
I was in once. They pull out all their teeth so's they won't bite  
each other. (*moment's pause*) They can't enjoy an apple, you

know. (*She crosses, bends over him, kisses him lightly, feels his arm.*) Champ.

MARCEL. I'm just a guy with a fist, Edith.

PIAF. No. You're the best. Oh I've helped fighters spend it, more than once. Not you, though. When we go shopping it's for your old lady and the kids... I don't know why I put up with it.

MARCEL. I'd marry you if I could, Edith. You know that.

PIAF. (*slight pause*) No. You won't leave home. You're the faithful sort. Till death. (*Shivers, crosses herself.*)

MARCEL. You got to look at it her way. She don't get too much of a life, stuck at home.

PIAF. Better than any woman in the world. Except me. I've got this, haven't I? (*And she puts a hand on him gently. She turns, and feels her breasts, frowning.*) I think I will have these lifted. All the big stars are doing it.

MARCEL. No, don't.

PIAF. Why not?

MARCEL. You don't want to get yourself cut. Why take the risks?

PIAF. You do.

MARCEL. That's different. That's the job. Mind you...

PIAF. Mmm? (*She cranes, looking up at him.*)

MARCEL. They think you don't give a bugger.

PIAF. About getting hurt? Losing your looks? Does it hurt? (*He has risen and walked apart. He turns and looks at her.*) Yeah, I bet it does. What does it feel like to get knocked out?

MARCEL. Don't ask me! (*They laugh*) No, I had a guv'nor once, put you in anything for a bout...I was only a lad at the time. He was greedy...like all of them. Show him the money, his face'd turn colour like he'd an injection...no dignity at all. He had me down for this fight...I was only a nipper, and this old pug of a trainer we had went wild... 'his face'll be plum jam'...I could hear them. 'Oh' says the guv'nor, 'we don't mind what we look like, so long as the money's right.'

PIAF. Cunt.

MARCEL. He was right about the money. You don't do it for love. No, you're on your own there all right — in the ring, I mean.

*He looks at her.*

PIAF. Yeah, I know. Well, I don't mean I'm gonna get me head bashed in . . . not 'less I'm dead unlucky. Still . . . it's the same every night . . . before you go on. Never mind what they've said to you in the dressing room, your mates. That walk to the fucking mike — it's from here to Rome. And if you fuck it, you can't say . . . hang on, mind if I have another go — well, I have been known to. (*They laugh.*) No, sometimes you want to start all over again . . . get it right.

MARCEL. I know what you mean. (*They laugh.*)

PIAF. Can't though, can you?

MARCEL. (*dry*) No.

PIAF. (*indicating the audience*) They've paid their money, sat through it, they want to go home, whereas you're all — Up! (*slight pause*) Even worse if it's gone off well.

MARCEL. How do you mean?

*She stands, gazing out, and up at the circle.*

PIAF. What is there to come off for? (*She turns to him, shrugging.*) You're only on your own again.

*Silence. They have both said more than is usual between them and they are baffled.*

MARCEL. I'm very proud of you, Edith.

PIAF. I don't know what for. You could have anybody love, you don't need an old loosebum like me, you can get the young ones.

MARCEL. Come off it.

PIAF. No, I shouldn't insult you. You don't have to prove anything.

MARCEL. It's all greed.



PIAF. Yeah. (*She looks into his face.*) You're lovely. (*They embrace.*) You know what your trouble is?

MARCEL. No, what?

PIAF. You're too reasonable.

MARCEL. Right, I'll dot you one. (*He goes for her, playful. They tumble, laughing. She sits up.*)

PIAF. Don't go, love.

*He gets up, straightens his tie, runs his hand over his hair.*

MARCEL. Now come on...

PIAF. (*Crosses to him.*) Well get an earlier plane back. For me.

MARCEL. (*Kisses her gently.*) All right kid. (*Kisses her again.*) Just for you. (*He extricates himself from her arms and goes.*)

*The music of MON DIEU becomes very loud, ending in a drumroll. Abrupt light change to cold light.*

*PIAF stands alone, to the reverberation of deep notes sustained on piano and accordeon. Silence.*

PIAF. (*Quietly...dazed, as if waking from a dream.*)  
Marcel?

*PIAF sings LA BELLE HISTOIRE D'AMOUR.*

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE

*PIAF's dressing room in New York. PIAF ... off ... singing  
HYMNE A L'AMOUR, Some applause. Pause.*

*PIAF enters, fast, whisky bottle in one hand, slopping  
glass in the other.*

PIAF. (*on the move, muttering to herself*) ...fuck me...  
I don't fucking believe it — OUT...oh, it's you. (*PIERRE ap-  
pears.*) DON'T say anything.

PIERRE. Pif, there's nothing that can't be fixed. A change  
of repertoire, that's all.

PIAF. OK, so they play off the fucking beat, that's all they  
can do...it's like singing in a cemetery.

PIERRE. I think you should —

PIAF. I'm going home. I must have been daft — why the  
fuck d'you put me up for it? I should have listened to Maurice,  
I should have done that film. We're going to be right down  
the sluice.

PIERRE. Not necessarily.

PIAF. Don't be so daft.

PIERRE. We've got signed contracts...coast to coast — and  
a return spot here.

PIAF. Bollocks.

PIERRE. We're contracted, Edith!

PIAF. When were you born, kid?

PIERRE. I'm telling you —

PIAF. No, no, no...listen...look...look, love, it's not worth — asspaper!

PIERRE. If the Yanks want to renege on their contractual obligations it's going to cost them money. They're legally contracted!

PIAF. (*short laugh*) You got a lot to learn. Look, Pierrot, what do you think the law is...who do you think it's for? People like us? People who make the laws do it for their own use. The contract that can't be split down the middle doesn't exist. They don't want us, we don't play. Believe me. Fact of life. (*a knock*) I don't want to SEE anybody!

PIERRE. It's Jo.

*It is JOSEPHINE BAKER, shining, glamorous, and full of vitality. She waves to PIERRE, swoops on PIAF, embraces her, then inspects her.*

JOSEPHINE. Fuck up, huh?

PIAF. Are you kidding?

JOSEPHINE. Sure, we have to go to work.

PIAF. I'm going home. (*to PIERRE*) Book the flights, love.

JOSEPHINE. Forget it. (*She jerks her head at PIERRE.*)

PIERRE. Piaf, I think you should listen. (*He goes.*)

JOSEPHINE. We'll talk about it.

PIAF. (*drinking*) I don't know what I'm supposed to be celebrating. Long time since I got the bloody bird — shave under me armpits next time.

JOSEPHINE. (*laughs*) That's better!

PIAF. They don't know what I'm singing about half the time. Anyway, who wants to see some little cunt looking like a war widow when they can have Doris Day.

JOSEPHINE. Stop putting yourself down.

PIAF. Perhaps I should sex it up a bit.

JOSEPHINE. Over my dead body.

PIAF. All right for you, Dusky, you don't have the same problems.

JOSEPHINE. (*dry*) You think so?

PIAF. Let's face it, I didn't start out with what you've got.

JOSEPHINE. Neither did I, kid. Come on...you don't have to fall for all that glamour stuff...you're the real thing!

PIAF. Oh, sod that...where's it got me?

JOSEPHINE. You're not out of a sixpack — mind your language.

PIAF. Sorry.

JOSEPHINE. And lay off that.

PIAF. Keeps me going.

JOSEPHINE. Not for long.

PIAF. Anyway, what's the point? One sentence. "Get an earlier plane."

JOSEPHINE. Honey, you have to get over it. You know you do.

PIAF. Yeah. (*But she turns her head away.*)

JOSEPHINE. Now don't start crying again. Tich — come on! You'll ruin your eyes for the late show.

PIAF. I'm not going out there again! I'm all on me own, you know.

JOSEPHINE. That's not true and you know it. (*She hands PIAF a handkerchief.*)

*PIAF snivels and sniffs, then blows her nose with a snort into the handkerchief and hands it back to JOSEPHINE.*

PIAF. (*tragic*) I wasn't always on me own.

JOSEPHINE. (*Apart, she knows what's coming.*) Oh shit. (*to PIAF, soothing*) I know, baby, I know.

PIAF. I ever tell you about my little girl?

JOSEPHINE. Sure. Lotsa times. Poor little Georgette.

PIAF. (*firmly*) Natalie.

JOSEPHINE. Didn't you tell me —

PIAF. (*a quelling glance*) Died in my arms. Didn't cry! — well, she was a real little lady, genuine marquis, her father.

JOSEPHINE. No kidding. (*Accepts PIAF's fanciful mood.*)

PIAF. Over a year I nursed that kiddie...like an little angel, she was...

JOSEPHINE. Ah...

PIAF. ...blue eyes...fair curly hair...like Shirley Temple

only...you know – pretty. (*sighs*) I was only a slip of a thing meself...barely out of convent.

JOSEPHINE. You're not kidding.

PIAF. Never left her side, you know! – well, except to go to the lav, of course.

JOSEPHINE. Sure, sure.

PIAF. I mean...

JOSEPHINE...Oh sure.

PIAF. Only just make it back when she snuffed it.

JOSEPHINE. My God...

PIAF. I mean...you'd never forgive yourself.

JOSEPHINE. Right. (*Lifts her glass.*) Here's to little Natalie!

PIAF. Who? (*Caught out, she breaks up. They laugh.*)  
(*growls*) Well, what did they expect? I know what they wanted – some crap with a feather up its ass. Like hell – I'm Piau!

JOSEPHINE. That's better!

PIAF. When I go on to do a song it's me that comes on. They get the lot.

JOSEPHINE. Sure.

PIAF. They see what they're getting – everything I got.

JOSEPHINE. Sure...but learn how to save it.

PIAF. Nah.

JOSEPHINE. Kid, you can't have an orgasm every single time you walk on stage.

PIAF. I can.

JOSEPHINE. No you can't. Nobody can. Nobody peaks all the time. Technique, baby! Trust it. Let it work for you. That way you don't exhaust yourself all the time. You're going to do great here – OK, some changes. They want you! Highest paid woman singer in the world!

PIAF *shakes her head.*

PIAF. Oh, fuck the money.

JOSEPHINE. Oh, sure we go out there because we want to be loved...like all those other myths from people who never gave one ounce of themselves...what do they know?

PIAF. They know when they want you. (*slight pause*) Nah,

it's not the money...they couldn't PRINT enough for the way we feel — I've seen you shaking away in the wings. Singing ditties? That's just the fucking tourist trade. No... when I'm out there — it's got to happen. Doesn't happen...terrible.

JOSEPHINE. I know what you mean.

PIAF. The trouble is, I'm off my own patch here... that's where it's going wrong.

JOSEPHINE. Good... you're beginning to work, that's my baby.

PIAF. OK...give it a whirl...just for you, Dusk.

*They embrace to seal the deal.*

JOSEPHINE. Listen, promise me something.

PIAF. For you, anything.

JOSEPHINE. I'm serious. This is a big country. Take care of yourself.

PIAF. OK.

JOSEPHINE. I mean it.

PIAF. Sure... Mom.

*They laugh.*

JOSEPHINE. We'll do the town...have a great time — hey, would you like to meet Harry Truman? He's about your size.

PIAF. So I noticed.

JOSEPHINE. Listen, he's a sharp fellow and tells a mean story, no flies.

PIAF. Sure... why not?

## SCENE TWO

*A Bar. Two American SAILORS, in their cups, and a BAR-MAN. PIAF sitting between the SAILORS on a bar stool. She is wearing a cocktail hat and a short silver fox jacket over her black dress.*

PIAF. Hi boys what are you drinking?

1ST SAILOR. Shortie! Where've you been all my life?

PIAF. (*belching good naturedly at the whisky on his breath.*) Make it a double.

*The BARMAN obliges.*

1ST SAILOR. Thanks, Mam.

2ND SAILOR. (*a very loud whoop*) Whoo-hoo!

1ST SAILOR. So what's fancy little lady like you doing in a joint like this?

PIAF. You'd be amazed.

2ND SAILOR. Here's looking at you, kid.

PIAF. (*to BARMAN*) Got a room upstairs? (*He nods, she throws a note on his tray.*) So, how about it, boys?

2ND SAILOR. Anything you say, little lady, anything you say.

1ST SAILOR. Lead me, lady, lead me.

*PIAF gets up...1ST SAILOR follows her. The other lags, rejected.*

PIAF. What are you waiting for?

2ND SAILOR. You mean, me too, Mam?

PIAF. If I'm giving lessons I may as well take the whole class.

*The BARMAN puts down his cloth and follows them off purposefully.*

### SCENE THREE

*PIAF's apartment in Paris. Partly furnished...There is a sofa, a small table, two usable chairs . . . and furniture half unpacked.*

*MADELEINE enters stage left as PIAF enters stage right, a mink coat over her shoulder and carrying a bou-*

*quet of flowers. She is followed by LUCIEN, much younger than PIAF. He wears clothes au courant for the fifties. His manner is wire tight.*

MADELEINE. Piaf...you're back! We were coming to meet you!

PIAF. Caught an earlier plane. (*She takes off her coat, drops it on the floor. MADELEINE picks it up.*) Nice place. I like it.

MADELEINE. It *was* jolly difficult finding an apartment with seven bedrooms — you did say seven?

PIAF. Sure — Lucien here likes a change of view every night.

MADELEINE. (*baffled*) Oh I see.

PIAF. Nah, it's for his group. There's seven of them, eight including me. I'm gonna put these boys on the map! Did you get that big fridge?

MADELEINE. (*faintly*) Will you be dining at home?

PIAF. Nah, just for snacks...cheese, hamburgers, Seven Up, they're growing lads — oh and cornflakes...they're *very* into cornflakes. Go on, Lucien...read me the notices...ah, look at his dear little bum.

MADELEINE goes. PIAF sits, helping herself to a drink.

LUCIEN picks up the papers and reads.

LUCIEN. "At first sight you wonder...this dumpy little woman with the big forehead..."

PIAF. (*growls*) It's not that big...

LUCIEN. "...black dress, pale, agitated hands..."

PIAF. Christ...

LUCIEN. "...then she opens her mouth...sounds like you never heard...a cat mewling on the tiles...the ecstasy of morning...they are all here."

PIAF. Do you wanna touch me up?

LUCIEN. (*putting a hand inside her dress and reading a new notice*) "How is it possible to listen to one woman singing twenty songs in a foreign language, and find one's face wet



with tears at the end? There is only one word for it — genius. And that genius is Piau.

PIAF. (*growls*) That'll be Alain, bugger owes me money. Go on.

LUCIEN. (*a new notice*) "The voice, rising like the slanting sun from the floating bric-a-brac of the Seine on a warm spring morning, fuses the backbone. She sings of love. She sings of sexual treachery... of unhappiness... of being made helpless by love. She sings of being alone, and of feeling bad... and we can't bear it for her."

PIAF. (*abruptly*) Who wrote that? (*She jerks round, sloping her drink. He fumbles with the page.*) Christ, can't you read now? (*Gets up and stumps off.*) Bloody kids... can't even get myself a decent man.

LUCIEN. (*mutter*) Piau, you know how I feel about you.

PIAF. Yes, I'm your fucking meal ticket. Well, where would you be without me... eh?

LUCIEN. Nowhere.

PIAF. Right... and don't you forget it.

LUCIEN. Piau, let's not get in a fight...

PIAF. Who said you could call me Piau? Who said you could call me Piau?

LUCIEN. (*totally confused*) What do you want me to call you?

PIAF. It's Madame to you, and don't forget it.

LUCIEN. Even when we're fucking?

PIAF. Especially when we're fucking. Madeleine... Madeleine! Where is that middle-class bitch?

MADELEINE. (*behind her, good-humouredly*) Piau, I wish you wouldn't speak to me like that.

LUCIEN *grimaces behind PIAF's back and makes his exit, taking the bags. PIAF catches his exit.*

PIAF. (*calling after him*) And don't forget to give the dog his enema! (*to MADELEINE*) What do you think of him?

MADELEINE. The young man?

PIAF. Yeah... Lucien... me new feller.

MADELEINE. He's very good-looking.

PIAF. You can say that again. We really get it on together. Cold little prick. I said —

MADELEINE. I heard you, Piau.

PIAF. Yeah, well, he'll do till I trade him up. Always set up your next trick before you shove in the icepick.

MADELEINE. Come and lie down.

PIAF. There was a guy on the plane I fancied but he was Australian — you gotta draw the line.

*She allows MADELEINE to tuck her up on the sofa.*

MADELEINE. You'd be much more comfortable in bed.

PIAF. Nah, can't sleep if I try — got any tablets?

*MADELEINE already has the bottle in her hand. She tips out two tablets but PIAF reaches up, snatches the bottle and tips it into her mouth, taking a swig of whisky.*

MADELEINE. Piau, that's too many! *(Too late. She makes PIAF comfortable and walks off.)*

PIAF. Madeleine?

MADELEINE. Yes?

PIAF. I want full coverage for this opening... I'm gonna put these boys on the map.

MADELEINE. It's all taken care of. *(She makes to go.)*

PIAF. Rub the back of me neck for me.

MADELEINE. Do you want Gordon?

PIAF. I don't want to know how many times he's been raped this month... you do it.

*MADELEINE returns and massages PIAF's shoulders. PIAF winces.*

MADELEINE. Try to relax *(She continues.)*

PIAF. *(after a pause)* I still miss him, you know.

MADELEINE. I beg your pardon?

PIAF. *(angry)* I said I still miss him... Marcell! *(Gets up.)*

MADELEINE. I know, Piau... I know.

PIAF. Not that we'd have made it. He'd never have left his wife. He was lovely. Hate being on me own, without a feller. What do you do?

MADELEINE. Sorry?

PIAF. You're on your own what do you do, d'you see yourself off?

MADELEINE. Do I have to answer that?

PIAF. (*raps*) Yes.

MADELEINE. Very well. I have a little dog.

*PIAF laughs.*

MADELEINE. A chihuahua.

PIAF. Serves me right, eh?

MADELEINE. Come and lie down.

PIAF. No, I asked for that. You got a right to your own life, love.

MADELEINE. Let me tuck you in.

PIAF. Sure. You got a lot to do. (*MADELEINE tucks a rug over PIAF and goes.*) Madeleine!

MADELEINE. (*reappears*) What's the matter?

PIAF. I'm lonely!! (*MADELEINE crosses, sits with PIAF. PIAF falls asleep. MADELEINE rises carefully, but PIAF grabs her.*) Caught you out... where you going?

MADELEINE. I must get some sleep.

PIAF. You must, what about me? Get somebody on the phone... get Eddie.

MADELEINE. Piau, it's five o'clock in the morning.

PIAF. So what? Get Jean-Claude.

MADELEINE. He's on tour.

PIAF. What about Guy... Eddie... get Lucille, I must have somebody.

MADELEINE. I could try Helene.

PIAF. That fat bitch. I know, get old Toine, she's good for a laugh... my old mate from Belleville - get Toine.

MADELEINE. Before my time, I think.

PIAF. Well find her. Fucking friends, never here when you want them. . . find old Toine. . .

*She is confused with drowsiness. MADELEINE turns, as PIAF falls asleep again, to welcome TOINE, who enters in coat and headscarf.*

TOINE. Ede?

MADELEINE. Oh please don't wake her, she has such trouble sleeping.

TOINE. Who, Ede? Sleeps like a horse.

MADELEINE. (*low*) Would you care to wait. . . I know she's dying to see you.

TOINE. What for?

MADELEINE. After all the trouble we had finding you.

TOINE. You wouldn't have got me usually, but I'm on the early shift. Then I had to wait for a train.

MADELEINE. I'll get you something.

*She goes. TOINE crosses to PIAF, looks down at her before sitting.*

TOINE. Christ, what's happened to you?

*She looks round at the apartment in aggressive awe, jumps slightly as MADELEINE returns with a tray. TOINE knocks back a glass of wine in one.*

MADELEINE. Would you care for some coffee?

TOINE. No thanks, upsets me liver. Who are you, then?

MADELEINE. I'm Madame's secretary.

TOINE. Christ. Not the hostess?

MADELEINE. Ah, no — not the hostess,

TOINE. How many rooms she got here?

MADELEINE. This floor and the one above.

TOINE. (*outraged*) Two whole floors?

*MADELEINE refills her glass.*

MADELEINE. You and...ah...Madame are old friends, I believe?

TOINE. Yeah. We was on the road together. I'm a...performer.

MADELEINE. I see. What do you —

TOINE. (*quickly*) Well, I'm retired now.

MADELEINE. I see.

TOINE. (*quickly*) So you wouldn't have heard of me. (*Expands, undoes her coat.*) So, you're the secretary?

MADELEINE. Ah, yes.

TOINE. Typing, that sort of thing?

MADELEINE. I look after Madame's affairs.

TOINE. Christ. (*She appraises MADELEINE.*) Been here long?

MADELEINE. (*hesitates*) No, not long.

TOINE. Hmm. Get on with her all right, do you?

MADELEINE. (*fatal slight pause*) Oh yes.

TOINE. Humph.

*PIAF stirs, coughs, sees TOINE.*

PIAF. What the fuck are you doing here?

TOINE. She said you wanted to see me.

PIAF. Christ Almighty! (*glaring up at MADELEINE*) I must have some fucking privacy! (*Glares at them both, exits, coughing.*)

TOINE. (*to herself, ironic*) Thanks.

MADELEINE. Tch, I'm so sorry.

TOINE. Ah, don't worry about it, she can be ever so rude sometimes — look, are you gonna pay my fare?

MADELEINE. Of course. (*Exits for money.*)

PIAF. (*enters*) And where's the fucking gargle? Where's she gone? And where the hell did you spring from?

TOINE. I got off early to see you.

PIAF. Well, you might as well sit down now you're here. (*Takes a drink, feels better.*) How's the kiddie?

TOINE. I got two more now.

PIAF. You got three kids...never...I don't believe it.

TOINE. You would if you 'ad 'em.

PIAF. What's your husband do now?

TOINE. Warehouseman. Sanitary supplies.

PIAF. All right for hygiene then?

*Hiatus. They don't know what to say to each other.*

TOINE. 'Course what he'd really like is a little place of his own. There's a little bar down the road going cheap.

PIAF. Oh yeah? (*She can see it coming.*)

TOINE. Yeah...guy shot himself. All it needs is a coat of paint.

PIAF. I'll come round and have a look.

TOINE. Would you? I been following you in the papers. I cut it out.

PIAF. You don't want to believe all that. It's not all fun and games.

TOINE. Go on, you must be rolling in it.

PIAF. D'you want to meet Errol Flynn?

TOINE. Get away!

PIAF. No, I mean it. He's taking me to the ballet — I'll introduce you.

TOINE. No! Really? I'll have to go home and change — get a babysitter...

PIAF. Oh, never mind all that. Come on, I'll drive you round there in me new Porsche.

TOINE. Yoohoo! Hang on. You can't drive.

PIAF. Who says I can't...haven't tried yet, have I? Here...do you want to meet me new husband?

TOINE. Get away! What's his name?

PIAF. I'll think of it in a minute.

*PIAF and TOINE run off, arm in arm, laughing. MADELEINE enters, stands, money in hand.*

## SCENE FOUR

*A hospital waiting room. A very young man in a bright blue suit walks up and down impatiently. He carries a huge bunch of flowers, a bumper box of chocs and an enormous pink teddy bear. A NURSE enters...he approaches her urgently.*

JEAN. How is she...how is she...can I see her?

NURSE. It won't be long now. *(She goes.)*

*He walks up and down, smoking feverishly. At last PIAF enters assisted by the NURSE. Her head is swathed in bandages and she is on crutches.*

PIAF. Oh, look who's here! Only the pissar who tries to finish me off.

JEAN. Darling!

PIAF. *(swiping at him with her crutch)* Get him out!

NURSE. Steady, madame, steady.

PIAF. Fucking murderer!

JEAN. What d'you mean, you're the one told me to step on it!

PIAF. Got it all worked out have you? Thought you was going to cop the lot, the dibs —

JEAN. You joking, I was making more in hotel-management—

PIAF. Washing up, you mean — *(She takes another swipe at him and they both howl in pain.)*

NURSE. Madame...madame, please...!

JEAN. I got rights, you know, I am your husband!

PIAF. Don't you — *(She makes to go for him again.)*

NURSE. *(intervening)* Madame...Monsieur!

PIAF. *(to NURSE)* Pissoff!

JEAN. Stay out of this!

*The DOCTOR runs on to assist the NURSE.*

DOCTOR. Out...out, the pair of you! What do you think this is, a giraffe pit? Control yourself, Madame!

PIAF. Fucking do you for a start... *(Hits him, he yelps, and*

*grapples with her.*) Get off, you fucking poxer...oh, my head! *(She staggers.)* You'll have to give me something. *(She sinks to the ground, legs splayed.)*

*The DOCTOR and NURSE help her to a seat, the DOCTOR shaking his injured hand. As they do so she goes for JEAN again.*

JEAN. Aw!

DOCTOR. Sit down! *(The NURSE hands him a syringe. He sighs, and gestures to the NURSE over PIAF's head.)* Temperament, temperament. You may, Madame, be a vicious and foul-mouthed slut...*(He bends, kisses her hand.)*...but I salute the artistry.

JEAN. Salute who you fucking well like, mate. I've just lost me investment. *(He goes, clutching his crotch.)*

PIAF. Aw...give me something for the pain...aw...

DOCTOR. Chere Madame, that is what we are here for. A little pique! And it all melts away. *(He injects her.)* There. Nurse, I think she's broken my finger.

PIAF. *(Slowly relaxing.)* Ooh...oh...ah. That's better. *(They assist her to her feet. She pauses.)* Hey, Doc, did you hear the one about the man who wins an elephant in a drinking contest? He takes it home, ties it up outside his house — next morning...bang-bang on the door — neighbor. "Hey, is that your elephant out there?" "Yes." "Well it's just fucked my cat." "What, you mean like this?" *(PIAF mimes screwing.)* "No, like this." *(PIAF stamps one foot heavily on the ground. She and the DOCTOR laugh. The NURSE is shocked at the lese majesté with the consultant.)*

## SCENE FIVE

*Rehearsal studio. A pianist strums.*

*PIERRE and the MANAGER enter separately.*



MANAGER. Good to see you. . .

PIERRE. (*Puts hat and briefcase on piano.*) Long time.

MANAGER. Sit down, take the weight off your feet. Any idea of. . . only I said ten thirty because naturally I didn't expect to see you till about now.

PIERRE. She'll be along. Car's probably on its way. She was up when I rang.

*Slight pause.*

MANAGER. So, how's it going?

PIERRE. Very well, very well.

MANAGER. Plenty of money coming in?

PIERRE. Oh yes.

MANAGER. I should think you earn your screw, son. You've stayed the distance — how d'you manage it?

PIERRE. We get along all right.

MANAGER. She does what she wants, you mean.

PIERRE. No, no . . . there's give and take.

MANAGER. Wouldn't do for me. There's only one thing to do with a woman who makes trouble.

PIERRE. What? . . . make love to her, you mean?

MANAGER. No. Hit 'em in the face.

PIERRE. What?

MANAGER. They don't like that.

PIERRE. I see.

MANAGER. Couple of clips round the kisser, kid, you'd have no trouble at all. (*PIERRE gets up, moves away.*) What about songs?

PIERRE. Couple of new ones. Really good.

MANAGER. Hmmm. Now, about this latest idea. . .

PIERRE. Oh come on. . . you know how she is. It's worked before. She is a professional — where the work's concerned she's the best in the bloody world, now you know that. Where else would you fill this bloody barn without backup artists. . . she's always been a good thing from that point of view.

MANAGER. I pay for it.

PIERRE. Sure. Sure. We can come to an agreement. Look, if it keeps her happy, that's all that matters.

MANAGER. Yeah, well, I was sorry to hear about the latest accident. Did she get my flowers?

PIERRE. Yes. Thanks.

MANAGER. You were lucky, that lad might have killed her. How's she looking, by the way... has she recovered?

PIERRE. (*carefully*) Oh yes. She's looking fine.

MANAGER. No scars?

PIERRE. No, no, she looks great. She's in love again.

MANAGER. Only I must have sophistication... my audiences demand it —

*PIAF enters at the rush, a bulging handbag under one arm. She wears an untidy, very dirty bandage around her head, from under which her hair pokes, greasy and ludicrous. She is slightly potbellied in a dirty pink jumper. The MANAGER blanches.*

PIAF. Hello, Henry, me old fruit... still the stiffest prick in Paris?

*The MANAGER is entirely unable to answer.*

PIAF. How am I? Go on — say it... I look like an old rat-bag! Never mind... wait till you see what I got for you!... where is he?... where's he gone? Angelo... Angelo! — oh, there you are. The audition's in here, love, not in the bloody lav. He's a bit nervous. (*ANGELO has entered. He is tall and handsome, despite the cowboy suit and boots. PIAF throws herself down... leaving ANGELO stranded centre stage.*) How about that, then! (*The MANAGER, lost for words, turns his back for a moment.*) (*to ANGELO*) Go on, love... go on.

ANGELO. (*slight Italian accent*) You want I should sing?

PIAF. Yeah.

ANGELO. Sing now...

PIAF. Well that is the general idea.

ANGELO takes a creased brown paper bag from his pocket, removes a battered piece of sheet music, crosses, hands it to pianist, who looks at it with a sneer, turning it over dismissively. He chews gum as ANGELO whispers instructions.

PIERRE. When you're ready, kid.

ANGELO takes centre stage. He takes a stance, Italian fashion, nods wildly at the pianist and launches into 'DEEP IN THE HEART OF TEXAS', with an attempt at an American accent, and gestures. The pianist finishes, but ANGELO does a repeat phrase, so the pianist tries to pick it up, a fatal beat behind. ANGELO finishes, holding a 'Yippee' stance. PIAF, grinning broadly, claps enthusiastically.

PIAF. What did you think of that, Henry! (A silence. The MANAGER, caught between shock and hilarity, can find no words. He bends his head, shakes it wisely. Looks back and forth, avoiding her eye.) Well?

MANAGER. (another pause) Piaf . . . Piaf — he's a nice-looking boy. Have him. You deserve a break — no, I really mean that.

PIAF. And?

MANAGER. Oh, please . . . (And hilarity overcomes him . . . laughs, wiping his eyes.)

PIAF turns to find PIERRE and the pianist doubled over with laughter.

PIAF. Pierrot? (But PIERRE bursts out laughing.) What's the matter with you all . . . what's so fucking funny? (Makes to attack pianist.) I'll do you for a start . . .

He ducks. . . PIERRE restrains her.

PIERRE. Piaf . . . you promised!

PIAF. All right! All right. But you're wrong...the lot of you.

PIERRE. He can't sing, love!!

PIAF. What's that got to do with it?

MANAGER. Piau, we're not talking about his cock.

PIAF. Aren't you? Aren't you? Then you bloody well should be.

ANGELO. Darling...please...

PIAF. Shut up. Look at him, take a look! Six foot tall, good hairline, good nose...look at his thighs! OK, the suit's a joke, even I can see that. But put him in something decent...give him the right material, the girls'll go mad. He's a fucking Eyetie, for God's sake! I know — ballads...he needs ballads! O Sole Mio...O Sole Mio, pet...

ANGELO. No, no...

PIAF. Come on, love... give 'em the old bon giorno.

ANGELO. Is not right...is too square.

PIAF. Nah, nah, come on, trust me...I know what I'm doing. (*She begins to hum it. He breaks into the song... and sings gloriously. When he reaches the high bit she cuts him off.*) OK, OK — there, you see...see what I mean? When he forgets to perform, he's Lovely! He's a winner! (*But there is no response.*) Oh, fucking men. (*No response.*) All right, if it's down to me...I'll whack in thirty per cent. (*No response.*) Fifty.

PIERRE. Piau!

PIAF. Shut up...whose side are you on!

PIERRE. All right. OK.

*He leaves, with the MANAGER. Light change. PIAF helps ANGELO into a new jacket, changes his tie.*

PIAF. What's the matter?

ANGELO. (*restless*) I don't know.

PIAF. I do. You feel out of place.

ANGELO. I don't belong here.

PIAF. Nobody does, love.

ANGELO. What am I doing here...I'm a labourer!

PIAF. This is work, too, you know — we've worked hard,

haven't we? (*He shrugs, unconvinced.*) I bet your stomach never felt like that on the building site, eh? (*He grins briefly. She pursues her advantage.*) Look, all those bloody union meetings you go to... make a name, you can use it how you want... but you got to make a name first.

ANGELO. As a singer?

PIAF. Yeah, daft innit, but that's how it works. (*He shakes his head.*) And don't stand there feeling guilty because you're in the money... — anyway, wait till you've seen as many damp, shitty dressing rooms as I have.

ANGELO. I miss my mates.

PIAF. Me too. Sometimes I nip out, do a bit of street singing... just to keep me hand in. I heard a woman say once: "Hey, she sounds like Edith Piaf" and the other one said "Trying to."

*This makes him laugh.*

ANGELO. I owe you everything.

PIAF. You're lovely.

P/A. Your call, please, Madame Piaf and Monsieur Angelo, your call please. Thank you.

PIAF. Don't forget the plot on number three. (*He nods.*) Double intro... second pause... bam-bam... you come in.

ANGELO. Thanks.

PIAF. And remember not to waggle your head. Keep still. Make THEM come to you... make THEM talented. Let's have a look at you... no over here... (*He stands before her. She grasps his thighs with fierce adoration...*) Wah, they'll come in their knickers. But don't forget the men... they've got to like you, too... they've got to want to BE you. And listen. Stick to the gestures we worked out... don't drift into things of your own.

ANGELO. OK.

PIAF. Come off cleanly, big strides... but slower, like we rehearsed. Don't lift your chin up, it makes you look ugly. And don't hunch your shoulder — what are you looking like that for?

ANGELO. Nothing, nothing.

PIAF. What have I done now? I'm only trying to —

ANGELO. I know, I know. (*He turns away, clutching his stomach.*)

PIAF. I get it. I'm sorry, love. It's going to be all right... I promise. Listen, I'll be there. It's together from now on, you and me. (*She dives into her bag.*) Here, I was going to give you this after. (*She dangles a bunch of car keys.*)

ANGELO. What is it?

PIAF. What do you think...vrmm...vrmmm!

ANGELO. (*smile of pure happiness*) Edith! But you shouldn't

PIAF. Just this once! (*Kisses him.*)

*They embrace.*

P/A. Your call, Madame Piau...your call, Monsieur Angelo.

*PIAF moves away, takes a long scarf from her bag.*

ANGELO. Darling...what are you doing?

PIAF. Oh, just something for the rheumatism, love.

*ANGELO goes. PIAF injects herself.*

*PIAF sings "BRAVO POUR LE CLOWN"*

## SCENE SIX

*PIAF's apartment. At the end of the last scene there is a musical link, using the music of MISERICORDE, and introducing the powerful sound of a car being driven very fast. There is a crash. Which reverberates in and out of the music, ending with the music of the phrase "QUAND UN HOMME VIENT VERS MOI" from La Belle Histoire D'Amour.*

*In PIAF's apartment, PIERRE confers with a physiotherapist.*

PIERRE. (*writing a cheque for the fee*) So, you'll be coming to do the treatments daily.

PHYSIO. Yes, though I entirely agree with the hospital — it's madness for Madame to discharge herself.

PIERRE. I know. However, she insists.

PHYSIO. There is still glass to be removed from her forehead — by the way, how did she come to lose the three ribs?

PIERRE. A previous car accident.

PHYSIO. Obviously she should give up driving.

PIERRE. No, no, she doesn't drive. She tends to be driven by young men.

PHYSIO. I see.

PIERRE. Look, we fully accept the risk, but we need to get Madame working again. When can she sing?

PHYSIO. I don't think you understand! The mouth is badly torn — ripped. We can't start on that sort of scar tissue for months — she mustn't even speak!

PIERRE. No, no, that's impossible, she has a big concert in six weeks.

PHYSIO. I've obviously not made myself clear. This patient is lucky to be alive. Most women of her age would have been dead from shock on arrival. There's severe internal injury... laceration. She's probably only alive because she's a singer — we got very good response from the diaphragm. There'll be a lot of pain, for some time. Of course, she can be helped with that.

PIERRE. You mean, morphine?

PHYSIO. Yes. (*He catches some anxiety in PIERRE's voice.*) Why, has she been on —

PIERRE. (*Giving him the cheque*) No, no, no — it's nothing. Just... there was a lot of pain *last* time, that's all.

PIERRE goes. The PHYSIOTHERAPIST prepares for the treatment. PIAF enters, looking very much the worse for wear.

PHYSIO. Good morning, Madame Piaf.

PIAF. (*evilly*) Oh Christ, here it comes. (*A little, winning smile*) Are you going to give me a shot?

PHYSIO. I'm sorry, Madame, you've already had the prescribed dose. (*Her face becomes a vicious glare. But he will not budge. She slumps into the chair.*) Try to relax. (*He begins to work on her face.*)

PIAF. Christ Almighty! Madeleine! (*She catches the PHYSIO's eye.*) Oh. All right, get on with it. (*He begins again.*) Ow! Oh!

PHYSIO. Madame, please. You say you want to sing in six weeks. . . it's impossible, but at least I'm trying.

PIAF submits, grasping the arms of her chair in agony. MADELEINE enters, dressed for travelling, with her suitcase and a travelling bag and handbag. She stands. PIAF ignores her.

MADELEINE. Piaf. . . (*PIAF ignores her. MADELEINE puts out a hand.*) I've come to say goodbye.

PIAF. Piss off.

MADELEINE. (*low*) Please, Piaf. . .

PIAF. (*low mutter*) Fuck off. . . that's my answer to you mate.

MADELEINE. (*upset*) Very well. (*She takes a large envelope from her bag.*) You've given me too much. I can't accept it. (*PIAF spits on the proffered envelope. The PHYSIOTHERAPIST and MADELEINE exchange a small glance, then MADELEINE gently puts the envelope at PIAF's feet. She picks up her suitcase.*) Goodbye then. (*With a witchlike gesture PIAF wipes the envelope on her ass and throws it in MADELEINE's face.*) (*quietly*) Goodbye then. I wish you the very best. I really mean that.

*There is no response. She goes.*

PIAF. Go on. . . piss off after her.

PHYSIO. I beg your pardon?

PIAF. You heard. Florence Nightingale! "Ew, I'll never leave



you, Piau...I'll do anything!" Like fuck...they'll have your blood for breakfast — and sick it up all over your shoes — "Yew don't appreciate me!" Who the fuck do they think YOU ARE?! What goes on here, mate, is the rest of me. And it's not worth knowing, I can tell you. Come here, looking for glamour. They want glamour, they can pay to see me, at the Olympia... and I don't mean shoved-up tits, neither.

PHYSIO. Could you put your head straight, please?

PIAF. Nah, they all want a slice, even the bloody managers. Will they take the rough with the smooth, will they hell! They want the bloody product, they want that all right, all wrapped up with a feather in its ass, but *songs* — what do they know about songs! "What rhymes with June, lads?!" I said to him "No, I'm sorry, don't like it." "Oh, I thought you'd reckon it, Piau...it's a love song." Love! Nah, pretty soon they're not going to want my stuff. My sort's dying out. Going extinct. What they want now is discs. Canned. In the can — well, real thing, dodgy, innit? I mean, you can count discs... stack 'em... put 'em in containers. They don't bloody answer back! (*Again it seems as if she will settle, but no.*) Love. I'll tell you about fucking love. (*to the audience*) Friend of mine... tart... dropping a kid. We get an old nurse to her in the end... dear little baby boy. And the old girl's washing her down with Dettol after. "Hullo... where is it?" "Where's what?" says me friend. "You know, your bits and pieces" says the old biddy "...your Thingme!"

"Oh... that..." says me friend. "Chewed off long ago." That's fucking love for you.

PHYSIO. (*unmoved*) It's not uncommon, I'm afraid.

PIAF. (*sourly*) Oh well, you'd know, working in hospitals. (*brightens*) Hey, I bet you've seen a thing or two!

PHYSIO. Could you keep your head still please?

JACKO, PAGEBOY, *enters with flowers.*

JACKO. Hi, Piau!

PIAF. (*Unable to see him as PHYSIO tries to work on her face.*) Don't think we've had the pleasure.

JACKO. You will, love, you will.

PIAF. Cheeky with it. . . how d'you like to be in pictures?

JACKO. Knock it off, I'm a singer.

PIAF. (*She takes a look*) Are you now?

JACKO. Well, trying to be.

PIAF. Going to have to do more than try, love. (*She gets up, gives him the once over.*) Not bad. . . not bad at all. What's your name?

JACKO. Jacko.

*She kisses him.*

PIAF. Just my size.

JACKO. That's what you think.

*PIAF's throaty laugh rings out.*

*Music. PIAF crosses to her dressing table. Applies makeup. . .*

*Pulls down her corset nervously.*

P/A. Your call, Madame Piau. Madame Piau, your call please.

PIAF. Jacko! (*He appears wearing a Piau blue suit. They embrace.*) What's it like out front?

JACKO. Electric.

PIAF. Buggers think I can't make it.

JACKO. Not a bit. They love you, same as ever.

PIAF. Well I don't give them no shit — remember that, kid, give 'em the real thing. Mm, you're lovely — you can sing too!

JACKO. I don't know about that.

PIAF. Now don't piss on yourself, plenty do that for you — how do I look?

JACKO. Bloody good. . . will that stuff stay on?

P/A. Madame Piau . . . your call, please . . . your call, Madame Piau. . . thank you.

*PIAF panics.*

JACKO. OK, love, it's OK.

PIAF. You'll be there?

JACKO. Right where you can see me.

PIAF. Sure. (*Pulls herself together.*) Go on. I just need a minute to . . . get it together.

*He gives her a sharp look, but goes. PIAF injects herself.*

*Big musical build. . . "HYMNE A L'AMOUR."*

P/A. Under the directions of Michel Desmoulins . . . with the Orchestre Bourre . . . we proudly present . . . Edith Piaf!!

*Music changes to LA VIE EN ROSE.*

*PIAF moves to microphone. She acknowledges applause, laughing her throaty, inviting laugh. She announces the name of composer and lyricist . . . and then sings "LA VIE EN ROSE."*

*At the end of the song PIAF accepts applause, bowing, and waving with a warm smile.*

*Sharp light change. PIAF's manner changes in mid-smile. The radiant charm disappears and she looks up, her face murderous.*

PIAF. Kill the fucking lights! And where was the follow spot . . . I'm not that small! Just do what you're fucking paid for.

*The MANAGER enters.*

MANAGER. Piaf . . . Piaf . . . magnificent! We're waiting for you in the reception room . . . fantastic . . . wonderful! (*Embraces her fervently.*) I've got the new contract ready . . . (*Goes. PIAF turns to YOUNG MAN, shadowy in the background.*)

PIAF. Have you got it? (*He nods. She opens her hand. But he does likewise.*) Look, I haven't got any money on me . . . I'll see you tomorrow.

PUSHER. Sorry, Piau, I daren't, you know that.

PIAF. But I can fix it tomorrow, no trouble,

PUSHER. Can't you get it from the box office?

PIAF. No, he won't have it. (*The PUSHER moves off. PIAF becomes frantic.*) Look, I must have a delivery.

PUSHER. I'll be round in the afternoon.

PIAF. No...no...

*She hangs on to him. He extricates himself sadly.*

PUSHER. Piau, you know better than that. We're in the same boat, remember? I'll see you tomorrow.

*He goes.*

*PIAF becomes agitated. She begins to shake.*

PIAF. Oh God...oh...God...

*Her mania increases. She plucks at her clothes...scratches...shivers...heaves as if to be sick...whimpers. She crouches...howling. Then goes into a violent fit. An attendant enters. She fights him off savagely, screeching and terrified. He cuffs her and carries her off.*

#### SCENE SEVEN

*A room at the Ritz. JACKO onstage. PIAF enters, in a new jacket, her hair combed.*

PIAF. How do I rate?

JACKO. Fan-bloody-tastic.

PIAF. So you'd pay for an all-nighter, eh?

JACKO. You can have one now if you like.

PIAF. Why, you got an erection...ha ha...

JACKO. (*embracing her fondly*) It'll keep.

PIERRE. (*enters*) I like it. Keep it in. (*PIAF screams welcome, PIERRE picks her up, swings her round.*) Has she been a good girl?

PIAF. Cross me heart.

JACKO. A very good girl. Champagne?

PIERRE. What the hell are you doing in a hotel? I went to the apartment.

JACKO. Slight problem with the bills...no gas.

PIAF. And I wanted an omelette.

PIERRE. So you move into the Ritz?

PIAF. Only while we're broke! (*JACKO pours the drinks.*) OK, Pierrot! What have you come up with? I can't wait to get started.

PIERRE. Piau. . . I have to know. Is it finished?

PIAF. Yes, love. It's finished. All I want now is the work. When do we start, boss?

PIERRE. Piau, it's bound to take a little time. (*slight pause*) I can't get any bookings. They don't want to know.

PIAF. I've told you, I'm off the shit.

PIERRE. We've tried everything. Nobody's playing.

*Silence. PIAF mutters under her breath. JACKO proffers the champagne.*

PIAF. No love. OK, nobody's playing. Right. If that's the way they want it. If we have to prove it, we'll prove it. We'll do the provinces...fleapits, cinemas, holiday camps — feel like a tour. Lose the bottle, Jacko...

JACKO. Right, love.

PIAF. Give Michel a ring...Eddie...I'll need some songs — we'll start rehearsing tonight...OK, Pierrot?

PIERRE. I don't know. It may be difficult.

PIAF. Come on, I'll be a draw...they'll come to see if I can stay on me feet! (*He doesn't respond.*) We'll get all the publicity we want...the press are on my side. Come on, Pierrot...we've done it before, we can do it again!

PIERRE. One night stands...fit-ups...travelling overnight...that was a long time ago. We're all older. (*silence*) If we do it — IF we do it...

PIAF. Thanks, boss!

PIERRE. I said "if" . . . I hold the purse. No running up debts, no freeloaders, no private shows, parties, subs, handouts . . . you've got to start holding on to something.

PIAF. I know, I know . . .

PIERRE. If you know so much, why don't you do something about it? It's just common sense, Edith!

*A hush.*

PIAF. Sure. I know. I made a mess of it with the shit.

JACKO. (*after a pause*) You OK, love?

*She nods . . . turns to PIERRE.*

PIAF. Can't get me the booking, eh? Been trying, have you, or is it second thoughts time?

PIERRE. What do you mean?

PIAF. Where were you when I was in the bloody bin?

PIERRE. Look, Piau, I've explained to you —

PIAF. That's right . . . you had a lot on. What with your new apartment . . . your portfolio . . . not to mention all your new clients. I hear you're collecting glass now.

PIERRE. What's wrong with that?

PIAF. (*to JACKO, jocular*) Never asks us to his little dinner parties.

PIERRE. Only because I know you wouldn't come.

PIAF. Look, I've never tried to —

PIAF. You never draw breath! Get it together, don't miss a trick, lunch with the accountant once a week. Fuck your own grandmother to get that fur-collared overcoat.

PIERRE. Piau, why pick on me? I'm just an ordinary guy —

PIAF. Oh, I know what you are. I know what you were, and I know what you want. And so do those two little girls of yours. Don't bother waiting at the school gates for them.

PIERRE. Why not?

PIAF. You've made such fucking little ladies of them, they're ashamed of you already!

*A silence.*

PIERRE. (*at last*) Who told you that?

JACKO. Leave it, love.

PIAF. All right. . . I'm sorry. But we're not all into buying and selling.

PIERRE. You sell your voice.

PIAF. That's a laugh.

PIERRE. Yeah, because you fuck about. (*He is deeply angry.*)

PIAF. Well, I'm rubbish, aren't I?

JACKO. Don't worry, love, you'll never be a lady.

PIAF. You're right there. Oh I've seen 'em, the ladies. If they get the hots for a feller they take it out on a day's shopping! Can't risk a bit of the other, might give the old man an excuse, risk their investment. You look in the stores, any afternoon, there they all are at the handbag counters. If they put themselves to better use there wouldn't be so many wars. . . not that they'd be any good at it, too fucking mean. They think they can take it with them the lot of 'em. Hah. . . it's like the story about the man who goes to see his mate, d'you know it? He goes to the door and the wife answers and she says: 'Ew new, I'm afraid yew cawn't see him—he's dead.' 'Dead?' says the feller. He can't be, he's got my big chisel.' (*They laugh.*) No . . . we'll go on as we are. Just get me the bookings love.

*PIERRE rises, approaches her.*

PIERRE. Edith, I have to know. Is it over?

PIAF. (*Looks into his eyes, candidly.*) Yes love. It's finished.

*PIERRE embraces her, kisses her on both cheeks and goes.*

*She smiles up at JACKO, and he follows PIERRE off.*

*PIAF pushes up her sleeve for a fix.*

#### SCENE EIGHT

*Open stage. The MANAGER enters, crosses to microphone.*

*Reprise of Scene One.*

MANAGER. (*Testing the microphone.*) One, two, three...  
(*He raises his head.*) Ladies and gentlemen, I give you...  
your own... Piaf!

*He gestures, with a sharp glance off, and goes. PIAF appears.  
She sings the first few bars of LA VIE EN ROSE and  
breaks down. The MANAGER appears.*

PIAF. (*struggling*) Get your fucking hands off me, I ain't  
done nothing yet...

*Light change. MANAGER enters again, as before.*

MANAGER. Ladies and gentlemen, I give you... your own...  
Piaf!

*Musical intro. LA VILLE INCONNUE. PIAF appears, as-  
sisted on by JACKO. She pauses, but makes it to the  
microphone. Then stands, as if unaware of her surround-  
ings. Misses opening. MANAGER and JACKO run on to  
assist her off.*

PIAF. (*Mumbles, as they lead her away.*) What is it...  
where's the song?

*BLACKOUT. The MANAGER appears, as before.*

MANAGER. Ladies and gentlemen, I give you... your own...  
Piaf!

*JACKO has to assist her onstage. Frail and trembling, she  
seems lost onstage, and terrified by the lights. Eventually  
she approaches the microphone, only to collapse on the  
floor. JACKO and the MANAGER run on. JACKO kneels  
beside her, his face alarmed.*



PIAF. (*Looks up at him, returning to consciousness, murmurs.*) All right, love... all right... I'm still here.

JACKO carries her offstage.

### BLACKOUT

### SCENE NINE

PIAF's room in a nursing home. JACKO, spruce in blue suit, with flowers and presents, arrives and waits.

A NURSE enters, wheeling PIAF in a wheelchair. JACKO turns and is shocked by her appearance. PIAF is aware of this.

NURSE. Oh how lovely! Aren't you a lucky girl! Shall I take them? (*She takes the flowers.*) Mmm, lovely! All fresh and shining! (*She goes... young and pretty. JACKO looks after her briefly.*)

PIAF. Nice girl.

JACKO. Sorry? Oh... yes. (*He is upset by her appearance.*)

PIAF. They let you in then?

JACKO. Try keeping me out.

PIAF. I told them you were working nights. (*awkward pause*) So, how's it going?

JACKO. OK... fine.

PIAF. Good houses?

JACKO. Smashing... eighty per cent last night.

PIAF. Good!

JACKO. Well... Friday.

PIAF. Still good though.

*Short silence.*

JACKO. How've you been?

PIAF. Not so grand.

JACKO. Did you get any sleep?

PIAF. I had to ask them for something.

JACKO. I'll have a word with them.

PIAF. I wish you would... I can't get any sense out of them.  
(*She turns away, and he looks at her, his alarm leaking out.*)

PIAF. (*turning back*) So, it's going all right?

JACKO. Yeah, very good.

PIAF. I told you you'd be all right. Any more news about the tour?

JACKO. Yeah... but nothing come of it.

PIAF. What d'you mean?

JACKO. The... terms weren't right.

PIAF. What do you mean? It's a number one tour, are you nuts or something?

JACKO. I'm not going.

PIAF. You bloody are. You are if I say so.

JACKO. I'm not leaving you.

PIAF. Oh? Like that is it? And who'll be the first to throw it in my face when the time comes? Don't be a fool, cockie... they won't ask you twice.

JACKO. Piau, I am not leaving you.

PIAF. Why, what's the matter, have they told you I'm going to fucking die or something? Well have they?

JACKO. No, of course not.

PIAF. What did they say?

JACKO. That you need a rest.

PIAF. (*mutters*) I'm rigid with rest.

JACKO. Edith... why won't you marry me? I could take care of you properly.

PIAF. Look, it's a number one tour! Do you think that's Nothing? I don't understand you, I really don't, bloody kids, they don't give a toss. I put a bloody lot of work into you!

JACKO. Well I'm not leaving you — I'm not leaving you in the lurch. When you're ready we'll tour together. I'm not leaving you in the shit and you can yell as much as you like... I shan't change me mind.

*She tries to catch his eye but he frowns with decision and won't*

*look at her. She smiles briefly, and looks away. Pause.*

PIAF. Well...as far as that goes...I suppose it'll have to come out in the open.

JACKO. What do you mean?

PIAF. It's the elbow, old son — haven't you seen it coming? I mean... (*Flounders slightly*) ... that's why they ... haven't been letting you in. Didn't you see him...the orderly? He's got lovely blue eyes, you know they've always been my favourite...oh, there's been some real fun and games...

JACKO. I don't believe it.

PIAF. Hard luck on you then. (*He tries to take her hand but she withdraws it.*) Get the message, son. You've had a good run for it.

*He turns away, upset, then looks at her, blinking with shock.*

PIAF. Now listen. You've got a lovely tone, but lift...lift. And don't forget the diction, it never hurts them to hear what you're singing about, never mind the A and R wizards. My God, those eyes of yours, you knock 'em cold. Here...something for luck. (*She gives him her cross of St. Theresa. He bends his head, crying silently. She makes to touch his head, but withdraws her hand.*) All right love, all right. Now come on, give us a kiss.

*He kisses her. She embraces him needfully for a moment, then withdraws.*

PIAF. Go on, piss off...I need a kip.

JACKO. (*going . . . turns*) Look if there's anything . . . any time —

*But she waves him off irritably. He wavers, and goes, stumbling. The NURSE enters with the flowers in water.*

NURSE. Oh, he's gone...that was a love you and leave you! Aren't they lovely! There! (*She hums arranging the flowers . . . pretty, fit and happy. PIAF watches her*) Oh, by the way — HE's here again.

PIAF. What?

NURSE. You know.

PIAF. Who?

NURSE. The foreign boy.

PIAF. What does he want?

NURSE. Nobody knows — we've been trying to find out but he's so shy! I think what he really wants is to *see* you.

PIAF. Are you kidding?

NURSE. I said I'd ask.

PIAF. Oh, tell him me fanny's dropped off and I'm having a transplant!

NURSE. I shan't say anything of the sort. (*She tidies PIAF up.*) There, that's better.

PIAF. What's he look like?

NURSE. I keep telling you, he's very handsome! You could just thank him. . . just for a minute. He's been every day.

PIAF. Oh, all right. . . just for a minute. Only for you, though. And he'd better be good-looking. (*The NURSE goes.*) Frighten him for life. (*She scratches weakly at her hair, wheels herself across the room, turns the chair and bends, anchoring it. THEO enters, and stands shyly, carrying a small bunch of violets.*) (*Her head bent, putting the brake on the chair.*) Well, now you've seen me. What's the matter, died of shock? (*She turns to look at him. They look at each other. A pause. At last*) What's in it for you, kid?

THEO. I don't want anything.

PIAF. Ah, come off it.

THEO. No.

PIAF. Come on. . .

THEO. We-ell —

PIAF. Ahaha.

THEO. Perhaps. . . to be near you.

PIAF. Why? What for?

THEO. I don't know. (*pause*) I like it. (*pause*) It makes me happy. (*They look at each other. Then she gets a fit of coughing. At once he is at her side, wiping her mouth gently, giving her a drink, quiet and unhurried.*)

PIAF. Thanks, kid. What's your name?

THEO. Theo. Theophanis Lambouskas.

PIAF. (*splutters, laughing*) That'll have to go for a start. Tell me about yourself, Theo.

THEO. I have seen all your concerts. Olympia . . Lyons . . Bordeaux.

PIAF. Oh, Bordeaux . . not so hot.

THEO. I wanted to come in America but that was not possible . . actually it was the money.

PIAF. I sang thirty songs in the Carnegie Hall. They applauded for twenty minutes. That's a long time. (*She puts out a hand, touches his cheek.*) You're a nice-looking boy, Theo.

*She pats her hair, conscious of her appearance.*

THEO. You want I should do your hair?

*He takes out a comb and moves behind her, smoothing her hair with swift elegance.*

PIAF. (*in admiration*) Oh, you're a hairdersser. There's not a lot left, I'm afraid.

THEO. (*quiet and absorbed*) We shall do miracles. (*He bends over her, and they embrace. He helps her to her feet and she walks to the microphone and lifts her crippled hands, her eyes shining.*)

PIAF. Ladies and gentlemen . . ladies and gentlemen, I don't deserve such happiness. Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to present my husband . . Theo Sarapo! (*She calls off, throaty and commanding.*) Theo! (*He comes on and she kisses him.* PIAF sings NON, JE NE REGRETTE RIEN.)

PIAF and THEO sing, together. .A QUOI CA SERT L'AMOUR. PIAF takes the end of the song alone.

#### SCENE TEN

*PIAF's room in the South of France. THEO is tucking her into the wheelchair.*

PIAF. Who was it?

THEO. A visitor, darling. The nurse will see to it.

PIAF. Did she say who it was?

THEO. An old friend, from Belleville. . . Toinette?

PIAF. Toine. . . old Toine? Never. Where is she, fetch her in . . . Toine?

THEO. I think the nurse has sent her away.

TOINE. (*enters*) Ede? (*bumping into THEO*) Where are you?

PIAF. Over here.

TOINE. Is it you?

PIAF. Well who the fuck d'you think it is, I'm not dead yet. Christ, you've put on weight. Let's have a look at you. How d'you find me?

TOINE. I took a train.

PIAF. Here. . . Theo. (*Takes his hand.*) Well, what do you think of him?

TOINE. I heard you was married.

PIAF. Come on, no farting about, what d'you think?

TOINE. He's a bit young.

PIAF. (*throaty laugh*) Never think she was an old Belleville streetwalker, would you?

TOINE. Edith!

PIAF. Oh, Christ you never could take a joke. Give her a drink — you still drink, don't you?

TOINE. Only wine.

PIAF. Theo, fetch the whisky, that's what she's after.

TOINE *shakes her head at him. He nods, goes.*

TOINE. (*Comes and sits by EDITH.*) How old is he?

PIAF. Oh, don't you worry, he's old enough.

TOINE. You don't do nothing do you?

PIAF. Nah. Still. . . never know. Anyways, thanks for coming. . . see your daft face, cheer anybody up. What's your old man say?

TOINE. Didn't tell him, you know what he's like. He still thinks you ought to have set us up.

PIAF. Oh, you know me, never could hang on to nothing. Still, we had some good times eh? Remember running in and out of Coco Chanel's buying two of everything. Never did pay that bill.

TOINE. (*Gets out Gitanes.*) Mind if I smoke?

PIAF. It's bad for yuh — read it in the papers.

TOINE. (*cheerful*) Oh well, you can only die once. (*And could bite her tongue off.*) Oh, sorry.

PIAF. (*sardonic*) Trust you.

THEO returns with wine.

TOINE. Aren't you having none, Ede?

THEO. Edith's on a diet just now.

TOINE. Oh? Oh, I bought you some apples. (*She gets in a muddle with her bag, cigarette, wine and the bag of apples.*)

PIAF. Hey you two, no getting off. (*She laughs her deep, inviting laugh.*) We could tell him a thing or two, eh, Toine? Her and me, we had our own band at one time. Mind you, she spent more time seeing fellers off out the back than we ever copped in fees.

TOINE. Edith! We had to eat. (*Pause. TOINE looks for topics.*) Hey, remember that time in Milan?

PIAF. You never came to Milan.

TOINE. Yes I did.

PIAF. No you didn't.

TOINE. I did!

PIAF. You never!

THEO. Darling.

PIAF. (*Lies back, eyes closed.*) It's all right, love... yeah, I remember. Go on... tell him, Toine.

TOINE. We brought these Chinese acrobats back to the hotel where we was staying.

PIAF. Go on...

TOINE. There was ever so many of 'em.

PIAF. Tell him about the goldfish.

TOINE. I was going to! Anyway, they had this ornamental pond — you know, in the foyer. We got them all paddling...

catching the fish in their little shoes! (*She starts to laugh, PIAF joins in.*) We...we went in the kitchens, making breakfast...we 'ad 'em on toast...d'you remember, Ede?

PIAF. (*Doubled up.*) Yeah!

TOINE. Little bit of garnish...anchovies...

PIAF. And noodles!

TOINE. (*Shrieking with laughter.*) Oh Christ, I forgot about the noodles — they went too far there. (*They both laugh, and subside together, clasping hands.*) Oh dear!

PIAF.. Oh dear!

*They wipe their eyes and subside.*

TOINE. I forgot what we did after that. Oh yeah...I remember. You tried to slash your wrists...Gawd, what a mess! I was so legless I nearly let her.

PIAF. Pity you didn't.

TOINE. She was always doing that. (*She smiles in fond remembrance, shaking her head.*)

*Slight pause.*

THEO. (*murmurs*) Darling...no.

PIAF. You're right. I wouldn't have met you.

TOINE. (*fondly*) We got thrown out.

PIAF. He's lovely. I don't deserve him. (*Her hands clench, picking at the rug which covers her knees.*) Go on, Toine, go on.

TOINE. (*Looks helplessly at THEO...she is stumped for a subject.*) Oh, I know. My little girl, Janine...the youngest...she's ever such a good dancer Ede. We're paying for classes — I mean, I don't know if it'll come to anything. Be nice though.

*PIAF seems to be drifting off.*

THEO. You want to sleep now?

PIAF. No, no, go on...you go on. (*to TOINE*)...go on, Toine...



*TOINE searches for something to talk about.*

TOINE. Um . . . yeah . . . um . . . ah! Remember the Boche, Edith? During the war? One of them looked me up once . . . I couldn't believe it! He was ever so well off! (*to THEO*) They shoved us inside . . . I thought our number was up, I can tell you — well, Ede was passing messages to our chaps in the prison camps . . . (*PIAF's head is bent . . . she seems to have fallen asleep.*) . . . is she all right? (*THEO drops to his knees at PIAF's side.*) Edith? (*THEO puts his arms about PIAF. The music of LES TROIS CLOCHES. Lights begin to fade.*)

TOINE. Ede?

*Lights to black.*

#### CURTAIN CALL

*COMPANY SING LES TROIS CLOCHES. OPTIONAL.  
PIAF REPRISSES NON JE NE REGRETTE RIEN.*

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